Sayonara Ryuusei Konnichiwa Jinsei

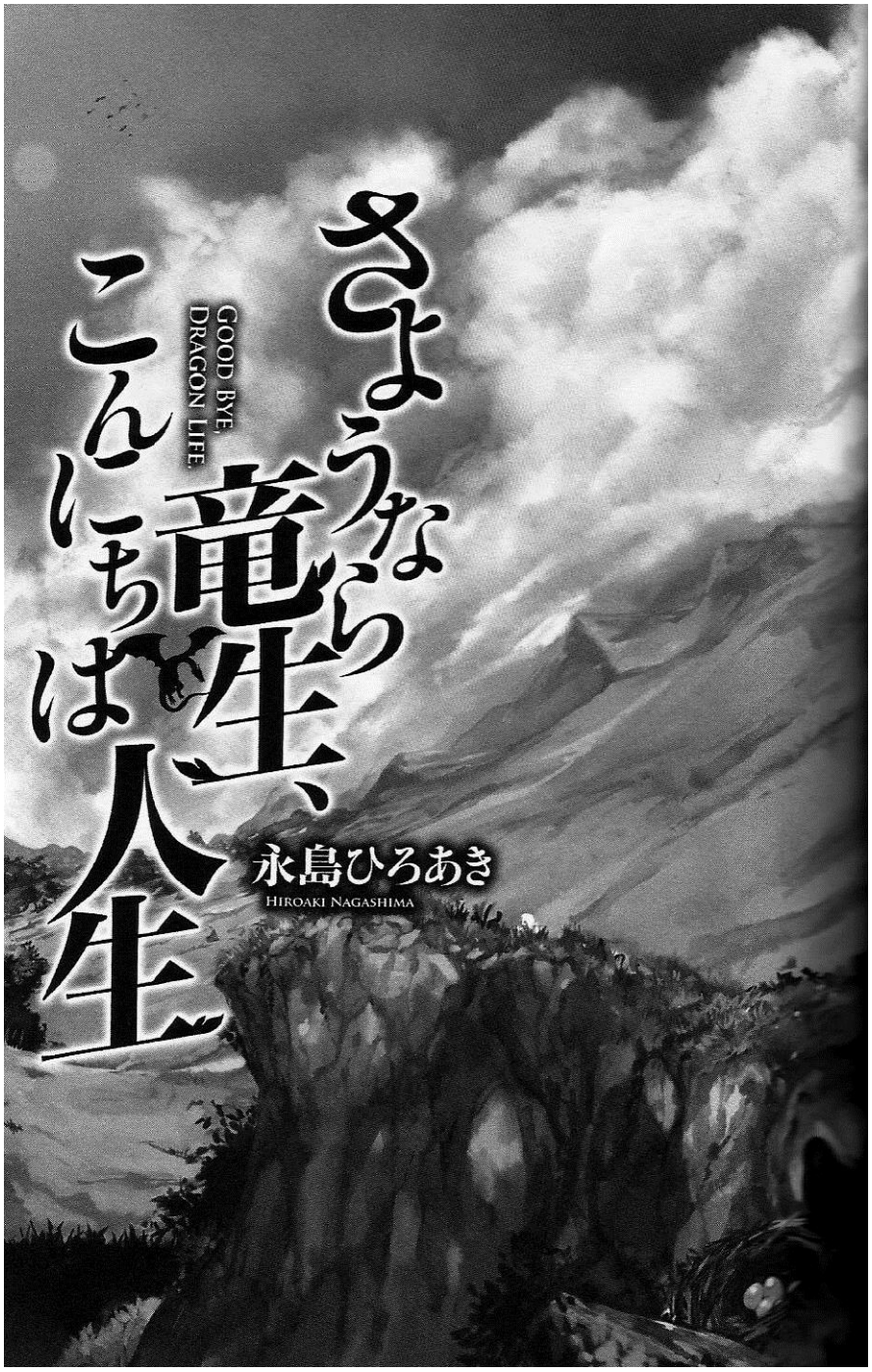
「さようなら竜生　こんにちは人生」

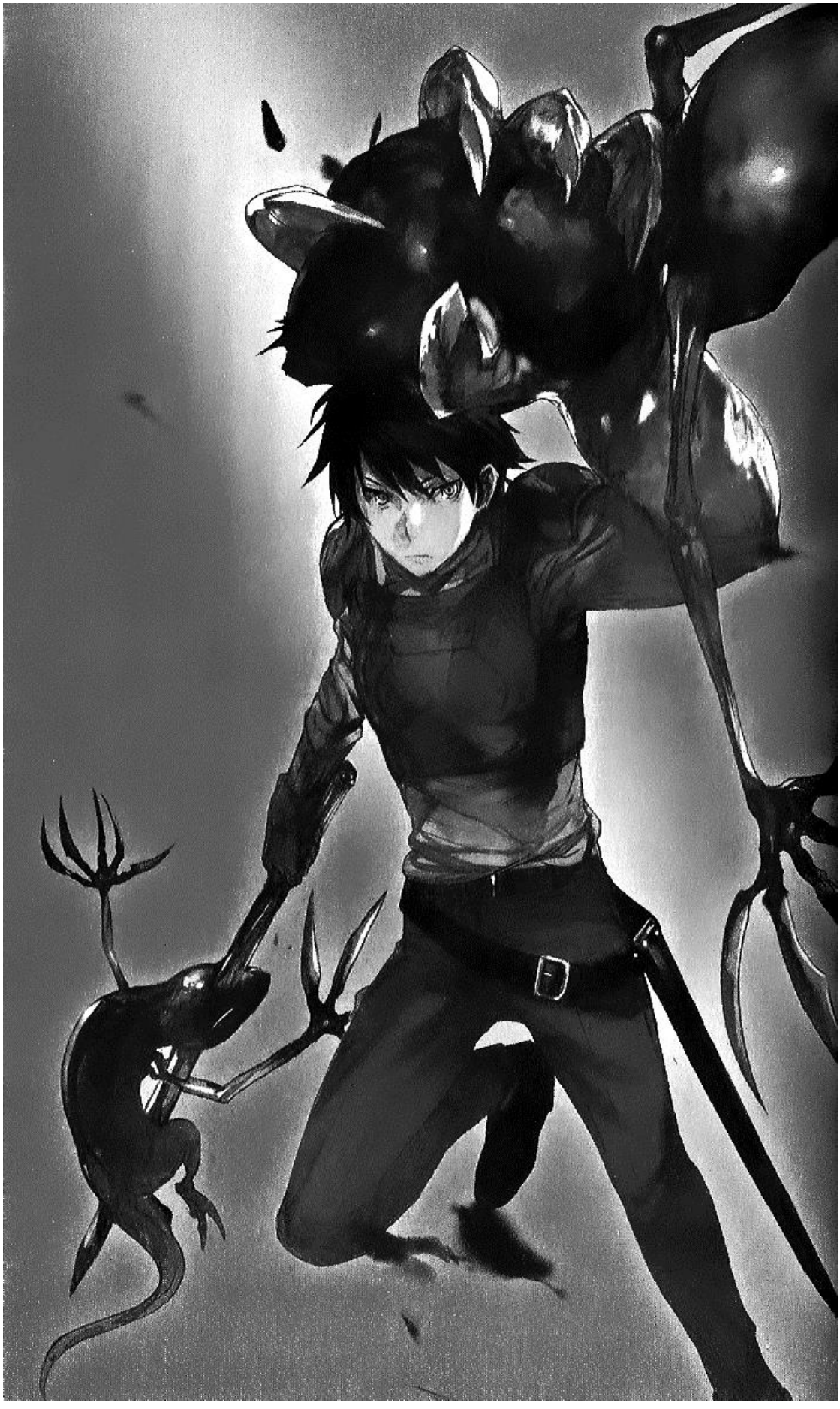
Good Bye Dragon Life Hello Human Life

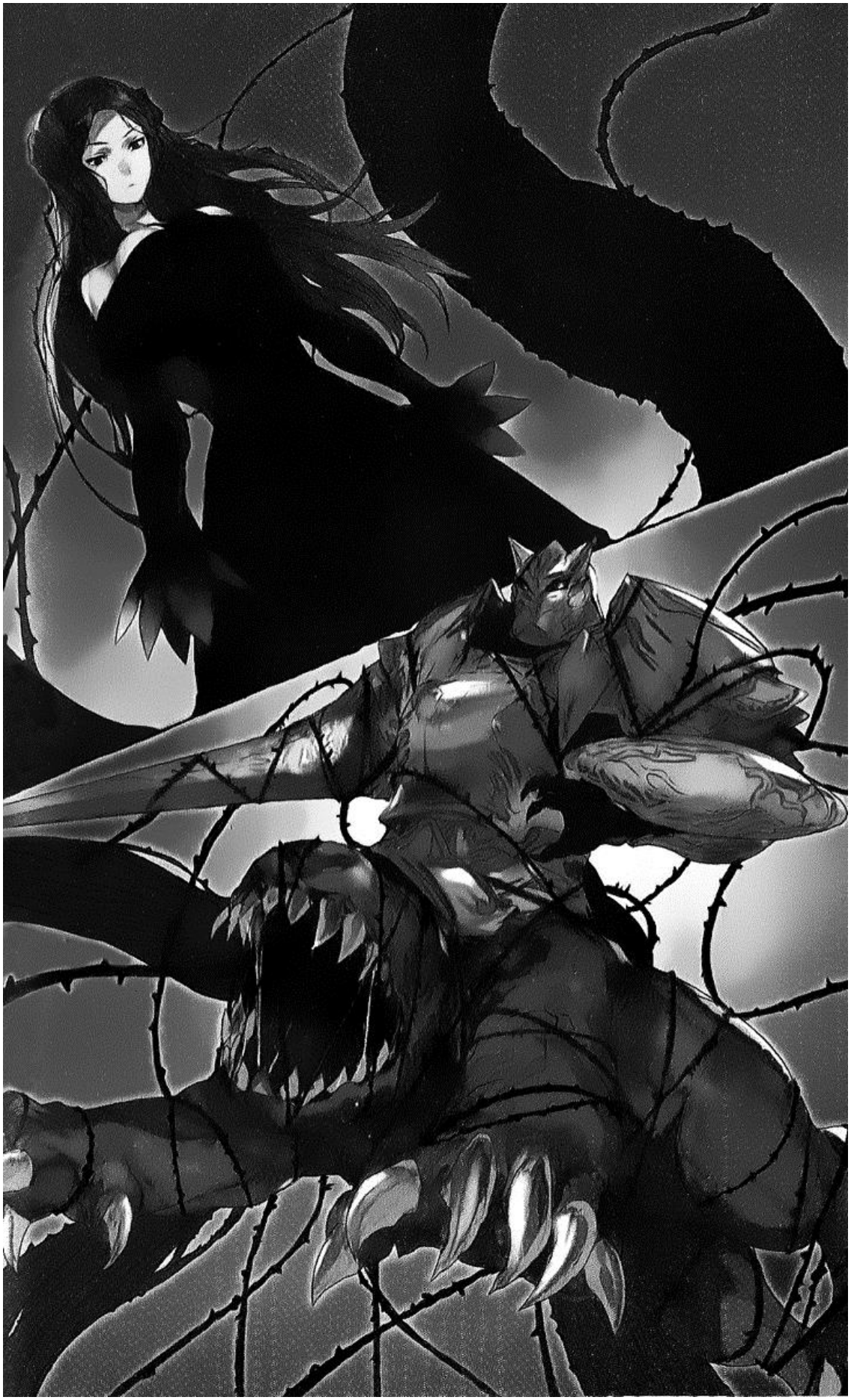
Author: *Hiroaki Nagashima(永島　ひろあき)*

Translator: Binhjamin

Illustrations


さようなら竜生、こんにちは人生
GOOD BYE DRAGON LIFE
永島ひろあき
HIROAKI NAGASHIMA





さようなら竜生、こんにちは人生
GOOD BYE, DRAGON LIFE
HIROAKI NAGASHIMA

[Chapter 1]

-Death and Life-

A story about the life and death of a Dragon.

The sky tonight is beautiful. I thought while looking up at the sky filled with stars. If I think back about it, it has been a long time since I had a calm sensation like this while looking at the sky. While lowering my gaze from the sky, I see seven shadows of Humans insolently step into my territory. Seven shadows, seven Heroes. Each and everyone of them possess both power and wisdom that are capable of sending chill down the spines of numerous demons and monsters. Behind them, around 1,000 soldiers are ready to slay the monster in front of them, me. They are emitting, rather weak, killing intent toward me.

Looking at the young man leading them, I open my mouth to speak. (T.L. Not sure about this one, it seem like he open his mouth to get stab? does that make sense?) Suddenly, pain spreads through me. At the same time, the ground beneath me has become a puddle of blood, my blood. It makes me a bit happy. W*hen was the last time that I was wounded?*

"I have not done any evil deeds to Humankind, as far as my memories serve me. In fact, I think of myself as an allies to you Humans. So answer me, why?"

No reply.

This young man, with the sword that has just pierced my heart in hand, the Hero whose name is the most well known in the world, Hero-tan, on his handsome face floats a sense of sadness. I understand that it was never his intention to defeat me with that alone. He was prepared, nevertheless. In disbelief, the expressions on the "back up" forces' faces are filled with surprise. After all, in the Humans' eyes, defeating me is something that is impossible to do even for the Heroes.

"To go to such an extent to kill me. Hero, to make the sword in your hand, how much wealth and time were used? The labor and resources put in to make it, just how many people do you think you were able to be save?"

No reply again.

As comrades in the past, I know that this young Hero, and the six that accompany behind him are kind-hearted young lords and ladies. They must have been ordered to do so. Anyway, my action just now is best described as suicide. *Oh my, will this become a joke throughout the Dragon race?*

While thinking, my eyelids have become heavy. This must be the effect of the spell that was developed to absorb the life force of a Dragon by stabbing a Dragon in its heart. Well, it's not too bad, to kill this elder creature, preparations need to be made after all. Rather, I am surprise that this works at all.

"Fumu."

“Listen well, Humans. Your minds are precious and beautiful. Your heart, however, is weak and full with desires. All of you are just Humans that can barely be distinguished between men and beasts. All of you who are not useful, may very well be eliminated just like I am tonight. Let my death be a lesson for all of you! This is my last advice to you, my little friends.”

Even though they are not proud of what they did, they still lower their heads and try to absorb the words that are filled with eons worth of wisdom, into their heart. I don’t mind if any of them mock me, rather, why not? I insist. It is boring to be alive for so long, my kind has reduced their number of off-springs because of it. It’s not so bad to die under such beautiful moon light. At heart, it makes me pass away calmly.

“Fumu…”

I take my last breath and close my tired eyes. To be honest, it is a boring way for a Dragon, whose strength rivals that of Gods and Demon Lords, to end his life. I’ve lived for a very long time. My brethren who roam the world along my side eons ago surely have not met their end yet. I feel relaxed and ready for the end. It is a strange feeling, one that not many Dragons feel towards death. *Oh, God of Death, may you guide my soul to the Sea of Souls, and grant me eternal sleep. Otherwise, prepare yourself and your Hell, to be engulfed in my raging fiery flame! I thought.*

“Hmm…Hmm..”

And so I hum. Actually, that was not supposed to be muttered aloud and it shouldn’t be since Dragons’ tongue cannot produce such a sound. We cannot communicate via vocal speech, but through our mind. *What the hell?*

In front of me, I see a pair of legs, they are small and bare. It take me a few minutes, then I realize that those are my legs. I, who is supposed to be drifting in the Sea of Soul forever, have just been born again, presumably as a Human. I jump to such a conclusion.

Why…why…..Why am I alive, again?

I hear the thump-thump thump-thump thump-thump sound. It takes me another minute to realize that it is the sound of my heart. But I also pick up the sound of another heart? Is there someone else here? My siblings perhaps? No, it must be of my Mother. There is no room and no competition in this belly. Suddenly, I feel tired. Probably from picking up too much information while being an infant, such hard work.

How would you react if you’re in the situation I am in? Not that much better, I assume.

Back to the matter at hands, why am I, who is supposed to be dead, live as an infant dwelling inside a woman’s belly? Just why why why why? Even though I intentionally died at hands of those I feel sympathy to, why can’t I have eternal rest? And of all things, to be reincarnated as a Human infant soul. Of course there is no one here to answer my questions. So, until I am free from my mother’s womb, which will take some time, there is nothing I can do about it. Nothing! But then it strikes me. After regaining the conscious of my thought, I ask myself a question. Will there really be a meaning in living again? My Human parents will surely be happy of my birth.

While thinking, through the liquid in my Mother's womb, and layers of muscles and skin, I realize that I may have an older brother, the family seems to be talking about what happened today. Will my brother be looking forward to my birth? I will surely steal his spotlight in the family. I was once born as a Dragon, this time, it will be as Human. Should I be born as a Human and live a life as one, will I betray the expectation my family has for me? Even though I am old, ancient, I admit that I am insecure about family. The main reason is probably due to the fact that I have never had a family.

Fumu.

Apparently, according to the conversation outside, I've been reincarnated into a world where science and magic have not been thoroughly developed yet. It feels uncomfortable and very difficult to make movement inside such a cramp space. How do babies live with this for nine months? Right now, my physical form is but a fetus floating inside amniotic fluid but my mind is that of a mighty Dragon.

As a normal fetus, there is absolutely nothing it can do inside here, but I am no normal fetus, already I've done the impossible at such a physical state, thinking. Even though I reincarnated, I definitely felt that a part of my soul is damaged. It's not to the extent where my life will be in danger, it is far from it. However, it is definitely noticeable.

So with nothing better to do, while listening to my family talks, I decide to use Chi Myaku* in order to allow me to interfere with the earth and increase the soil quality which will yield better crops and higher harvest where the villagers predict it would. All done, it takes a while, but the next harvest will be the best harvest this village will ever have. I spent all of my currently available magical power to do so. With that said, the earth will be fertile for the next few years as well.

It has been several months since I realize that I am a fetus inside of a Human woman's belly. It won't be too long until the day I will be born into this world as a Human baby. Will life have a purpose? The thoughts of decadence and resignation from living continue to fill my mind. I wonder if my mind would be free from these negative thoughts. I continue to think inside the woman who is my Mom-to-be.

Not long after, my Human mother finally gives birth to me, a strong healthy Human baby.

As the water is being wiped across my eyes, I force them to open and take a look around with my unfocused eyes. When my eyes focus, the appearance of a man and woman with gentle smiles was projected. I am being held along side of the woman and looking straight into the man's eyes. They both have gentle smiles on their face. I assume they are my parents.

When my eyes focus, I am being held alongside my mother and look straight into my father's eyes. They both have gentle smiles on their face. Being small, from my perspective, they are giants, and of course with the Dragon's perspective still in effect, I, for a moment thought they are Titans. My reason helped me back, since I am definitely not in Dragon form and so they are definitely Human being. I think. I can see my Mother's smile clearly as she is filled with joy.

"Thanks the Gods! My child open his eyes. Fufufu. Hello, my baby."

As my parents continue to watch me, I feel a sense of ease, free of worries. When my Mother gently touches me, it calms me down greatly.

“He doesn’t seem to cry very much. It’s better if he cry a little more, it makes me want to cuddle him more.”

My Mother caresses my cheek as she said so. Right now, there is still little I can do and so, being held by my Mother is what I will enjoy.

“My child, you’ll be name Dran. I am your mommy. Now, say hello to Papa.”

My Mother carefully rise me next to my father’s face, and then rub my cheek against his. Ouch, shave Father. I am not sure if it is the fact that we are related by blood but right now, I am experiencing a mysterious feeling I’ve never felt before. What Human calls “Family Bond.” (T.L. Family love, love in general)

I am the oldest of the Dragons. I have neither Mother nor Father. There was no one fit to be called parents by me. There were those who I can call brothers and sisters, but it is only in a sense. Therefore. For me who have been reborn as a Human. I’ve received warmth from my current parents and never have I ever felt as peaceful as I am now. I was tired of long life, and chose to be killed by brave men. Instead of giving me eternal sleep. This has led me to experience the warmth of a family. I can’t say that I am grateful toward my killers, but…Thank you. Anyway, how bad can this be? Living a life as a Human, and shoulder their hardships and struggles. This should be interesting.

“Honey look! Dran smiled!”

“A healthy, strong and cheerful boy. I am glad you were born Dran.”

I am laughing now? Haha, since when was the last time I laughed? There may be some worth living as a Human after all.

Chapter 1 [End]

[Chapter 2]

-Lamia-

Some time has passed since I died as a Dragon and was reborn a Human. I am standing in an open plain, such landscape is common in this world. A gust of cold wind blows against my face. There are still traces of last winter around, as of right now, it is currently early spring. My legs shiver against the cold as I continue to stand in this open field. It is fill with green, a sign of freshness. The wind carries a faint aroma of flowers too.

Currently, being held in my hand is a knitted basket. Inside are several kinds of medicinal herbs.

Fumu. Today's harvest is sufficient if I do say so myself.

While thinking about one of the Dragon race's favorite phrases as a habit, I fill myself with pride and self-satisfaction. While doing so, I hear a voice calling out to me from behind.

"Dran-san, let's head back soon."

"Ah, alright. It's about time, the day is about to end after all."

Turning around, the figure of a girl with long, flying, and curly red hair behind her back is reflected in my pupils. She's wearing a frayed fabric blouse and a long skirt, moreover, on her back, she carries a basket just like I do. This is the usual appearance of those who lives in a remote, and more to the frontier villages. Regardless, she has the smile as radiant as the sun, and the freckles around her cheeks further contribute to her charm. Her name is Airi. Happily playing around Airi, in the grass plain, are four Human children.

Airi and I are part of a small village named Bern located at the edge of the continent. They are not just children playing. They are the children of human, of man. The cause of me living as a human must be the work of the Three Goddesses whom ruled over Fate. I, who was the strongest dragon in existence, who held unmatched power, The Strongest, belonged to the most powerful race, was reborn as a human. When I was killed by the hands of the Hero, through some used of forbidden art, my memories and my soul, was was reborn into a new body while also retaining my strength. It was never my intention nor do I know who's intention was it to had me reincarnate. However, I've come to accept the fact that this was what happened and live with it.

All of the theories I came up with, since the time I was still an infant, are just guesswork. I still have no solid evidence as to why I was reborn as a Human. It could be that while I was dying as a Dragon, some sort of Magic Spell was used on me. My physical body was no more, that much I am certain. However, my soul, the soul of the strongest dragon, is strong and impossible to destroy. The Heroes or those who ordered them to subdue me must have known this, and instead tried to weaken my soul through reincarnation.

Thus, instead of going to the Sea of Souls, my soul would be force to repeatedly tries to transmigrate, destine to weaken along with losing my memories and my former strength of a dragon. When it comes to begins highly ranked in spiritual power, even if their their body, is destroyed, its information will be record within their soul. With it, ones can reconstruct or

recreate their body from scratch. To me, a body is but a container, and as long as my soul is safe, I can create and regenerate any amount of flesh to serve my liking. At the time when the Hero struck me with the dragon killing sword, I simply was longing for death, and in away, it was given to me. What happened then was just an exception.

Those who wanted me dead, out of fear about my revival, did something to me by forcing my soul into experienced their specially weaved spell which somehow interfered with my transmigration process at the time of my death. As a matter of fact, not long after my human birth, I took noticed that my soul was excessively weaken. That completely amazed me. Both the quality and quantity of magical power which my soul produce are different from the time before my rebirth.

The production of my magical power in the current state is like a completely different terrain compare to before. It was like down pouring rain in the past and now it is similar to morning fog condensed into drops of water dripping down from leaves, one at a time. Even so, the volume of magic my dragon soul produce is far, **far**, surpassed human's common sense. Fortunately for me, I have not forgotten how to handle such an amount so I won't die anytime soon, nor will I see any half alive, half dead person laying around as a result of my power going rampant. Also, human body is just like any other body, with enough magic, one can regenerate any amount of flesh while also be able to store excessive amount of magic. I chose to limit my power and only mimicry the amount an average human produce, taking care not to abuse my power if possible, and stay within the realm which won't seem too absurd to other humans.

As I follow Airi back to our village, the children are playing cheerfully while walking in front of her. The village is surrounded by a wall made of stones. With a population of around 300, it is only a small outskirt village at the edge of the continent. Being at the edge of the continent, the village often gets attacked by demons and bandits, so the wall serves as a line of defense. There are two ways to enter this village via roads. There is the North Gate and the South Gate. Each gate has two big wooden doors reinforced with iron. There are always at least two soldiers stationing at each gate. Each is armed with a spear and sword, along with bow and arrows.

In the village's vicinity, one can spot Goblins with child-like height, Kobold with dog-like heads, and armed Lizard which had lizard-like outer appearance walking on two legs. Although the first two races have strength inferior to human, they have a very high reproductive rate as well as fast maturity, they are able to increase in number at an astounding speed. Among them, there are also those who can harness the power of spirits, the shamans. They are not to be taken lightly. The Lizard on the other hand, has a much lower birth rate compared to the other two races but their individual combat abilities is much higher. The villagers in my village train with the Lizard to some extent, and everyone have a very tough time wining one-one-one. Especially when it comes to the Lizard's tribe commanding officers. They are a very, very tough match up. Even the skilled soldier or even a highly trained knight holding a normal spar with them must be prepared to come out exhausted.

When I still possessed my dragon body, I hardly considered the characteristics of these three races to be of any importance, but after spending some time as a human, I have reconsidered my ways of thinking. Fortunately, the relationship between human and Lizard, as well as other races is very good. The people of Bern helped the Lizard race out in time of needs and

the Lizard, likewise, thus both race were able to formed a good relation. It's not a common sight you'll see everywhere that human and Lizard are on good terms.

On the way back, I have an amusing chat with the others about the day, although some funny moments they mention make no sense to me. On the other hand, the children are still running around in front of us. Human children are very hyper. With that vigor, the continent is sure to prosper. Nothing compared to a baby Dragon being hatch from it's egg, boring stuff.

After we enter the village and get to the first intersection, I part with the children. I walk back to the typical looking house that I've built. The wall is made out of trees with mud as the filling. The roof is made out of straw mixed with grass.

On this country and in this village, one is considered to be an adult at the age of fifteen. In a family with a boy as its eldest son, at fifteen, the boy will start to work on the farm that will be provided by the parents or the village. After one year, it is a custom that he will build a house of his own, instead of sharing his parent's house, and become fully independent.

I am sixteen this year. It has been some time since I left my parents, and I'm enjoying my single life. Walking past my house, I decide to pay my parents a visit since the harvest today is very good, and I have some time to spare. It is a short walk to their house, since I've built mine in the same area. Opening and closing the wooden door with a squeaking sound, I enter the house.

"Hello Mom! Today's harvest was plentiful, I went to the store and traded them for some herbs and breads, but it seems like I will have some extra."

I say my purpose for being here and hand the herb to my mother.

"You've come back! These herbs have a very high quality to them. With this I can make some very good medicine."

"It is going well I see."

My mother Aracena greets me as I enter the house. My mother is the only one in the house, and it seems like my father and brother are still working in the field. My mother has her golden blonde hair tied up in a ponytail. She's wearing a faded apron along with a white scarf. The area around her waist is a little bit dirty. Such is the appearance of a mother I've always known.

Life in this region is tough. It is filled with troubles, dangers, misfortunes, and unreasonable situations, but if one can endure it, they will find some sort of happiness. With her back turned away from me, she turns her head and reveals a bright smile to me. Women in this village have strong wills, and strong hearts, but they are gentle to their family.

With my memories as a Dragon still intact, I find that it is laughable that the way my mother treats me and my little brother is very different. After all, my actions do not match my age, so she treats me as an adult earlier than my little brother.

There is a lot of work involved in taking care of a child, and the one who carries all the burdens is none other than the wife. I find that women are very respectable, and I have a deep

respect for my mom. Of course, not all Humans are worthy of respect. One does not simply have respect, they must earn it. My parents earned mine, but in this village, most people are simply too weak minded. However, that doesn't mean they are worthless, but it's a weakness of each individual.

Although there are Gods, and they are being worshiped by Humans who are seeking help. I also worship them, only in a sense of course. I once laughed at the Gods and crushed many dreams. I should also note that behind each and every one of these Gods is an ugly face that they never want to be reveal to anyone.

After handing the extra herbs and bread to my Mother, I return to my house.

My dinner is simple. I cook the vegetables and eat it with the bread I've gotten from the store. It is my usual dinner, but the taste of Human food mixing with the senses of a Dragon always gives me a fresh taste that has never failed to cheer me up for the last sixteen years of my life as a Human.

From time to time, my senses of a Dragon interfere with my Human senses. For example, when I eat, I always find that something seems to be missing. Apparently it is because I can't see my mouth while chewing and it annoys me. The field of vision is completely different from that of a Dragon. I had a lot of problem with my vision ever since I was born, but I've gotten used to it. I wonder if there are any other reincarnated Dragons around that have the same problem. The taste and sense of smell from my soul connected to my Human body are not completely in sync either, I wonder if they ever will be? But because of that, I can experience many interesting things.

There is no sign of a demon's attack tonight, so I give my thanks in a prayer that everything went smoothly today. I spent time and effort making spears and arrows for self defense from the trees I cut down while building my house. I use every resource the trees had to offer, from the branches to the roots.

My house has three rooms in total, a dining room, a bedroom, and a storage room. When I go to bed, I spread a thick layer of straw on top of the floor and put a layer of animal fur above it, then I have myself a place to sleep. Life for me is quite simple.

The weather here is harsh. In the summer, it is very sultry, and in the winter, if not careful, one might freeze to death. Mother Nature is not joking around. I take precaution against each of these problems by applying a couple layers of fur in the winter and less fur in the summer. Even so, it is difficult to sleep sometimes.

After a year of working, I believe the environment of this world is beautiful, and it saddens me to see what Humans have done to the surroundings. Especially the condition inside the village. When I was born into this world, it was warm and whenever my mom gave me an early morning sun bath, I was humming and singing, or tried to. There is only a handful of people that know of my secret, that I love sunbathing.

As the sun rises, and dyes the sky with a golden color, the villagers start to wake up and ready for work. I wake up earlier than the rest and warm up the leftover dinner from last night. After breakfast, I go to the field to work again.

Ever since I was a baby, I've always been curious about how my parents had earn the right to work on the field near the village outskirt at such a young age, for it's only a short walk to get there, and more convenient. As a habit of mine, whenever I have free time while working, I would walk around the neighborhood, and observe others working hard on their jobs. As to how I have free time, it is because my soul produces lots of magical energy, I occasionally use magic to help me finish with work. This is just my speculation but it seems like my Dragon soul also strengthens my overall senses and physical strength.

I devote a lot of my time into farm work and am aim to achieve even greater success in farming. Of course I will only use minimal amount of magic and Human strength alone. Everybody is always busy doing their own work, but my habit does not annoy anyone since it is well known to the villagers.

I can produce crops equal to the effort put in by 100 adult Humans per season if I use magic on my field. However, showing that in front of everyone is a no go. People who can wield magic are not uncommon in more populated areas, but around the edge of the continent, it is rare for a person who can utilize magic to be born. Fortunately for me, there is a family of magicians settled in the village. So naturally, I go to them and learn Human magic. But most of their magic are simple and I get bored of it quickly.

Thus, after I finish my breakfast, I go to work, and break some sweat to make a living.

As I walk into the open plain towards the forest, I see someone leading a group of children. Some thought pops up in my mind, but they are probably just going to help out with hunting. While thinking so, I continue on to my field.

On the same day, I decide to head to the Northeast region of the village, where the old Lizard tribe village was located. The friendly relationship between the Lizard tribe and the village is common knowledge around here, and when a disaster struck their village, the Human villagers helped the Lizard tribe build a new village near the lake around here. All of this happened about ten years ago. Before I head to the old Lizard village, however, I pack up a few days worth of supply because I will be spending some time there, in order to uncover what had happened to the village.

Few days later, when all the preparations are finished, and I am about to leave. I see my brother, Marco, in front of my house, and behind him are two women stand facing each other. The two women have delicate facial expression on them, and their experience look much like that of my mother. The atmosphere around those two seem very dangerous. They let out enough killing intent to scare away one or two Goblin. As to the reason why Marco is here, I asked him to take care of my house and my field while I am gone. This should give him some experience so that in a year or so, he can start to live alone.

"I will be going up to the swamp. I won't be back until tomorrow evening at the latest. I'll leave you my house and field to take care of."

"Yes, brother, you can leave it to me. After all, you take very good care of your house and field. Rather than that, you should be worried of where you are heading, be careful, it can be dangerous there."

It has been around ten years or so since that disaster happened to the Lizard tribe, there may very well be demons lurking around there. Humans have not set foot there since and neither did anyone from the Lizard tribe. When I declared that I will go there and investigate, my parents and brother were absolutely against it. There was a lot more commotion than necessary. In the end, I was able to convince them, and today is when I head out.

"If you do a good job, I'll bring back some souvenirs from the swamp."

"Just come back safely, without any scratches is good enough."

I finish bidding farewell to Marco, and depart. I carry the leather bag which I have put water and two days worth of food into. I bring with me a sword and a dagger just in case things get ugly along the way. Even though it has been ten years since the disaster, the road which heads Northeast toward the old settlement is still usable. There are stories about how people would walk there and mysteriously disappear.

As I travel further north, more Goblins and Kobold appear, but it shouldn't be surprising, considering the fact that this is where they live. Still, it is weird to see so many Goblins. Occasionally, I see one or two wolves that were separated from their pack. I am prepared to kill them if they come at me, but they are smart enough to avoid me. When the sun is about to set, I've already arrived at my destination. I set up camp near the site. Thinking to myself that I have survived the first day, Marco worries were for naught.

The people from the Lizard tribe avoid talking about what had happened to their village, despite the fact that they know something was unnatural. On the Human side however, no one is really sure what the cause was. This boggy place was where the Lizard tribe once lived. Yet for some reason they left it and never returned. Humans should have no business coming here. It shouldn't take too long to investigate, half a day at the maximum.

Before the sun set completely, I decide to take a look at the swamp. The vegetation around here flourishes wildly. Grass is very tall and the ground is muddy. The air is filled with fine water particles, and when they condense on my cheek, it feel uncomfortable. It is not as if the air around here is humid, because it is, but something isn't right.

Standing on the bank of the swamp, there is a nasty smell coming from it. There is no sign of life in the vicinity neither. In the middle, lay the ruin of the old Lizard village. Being exposed to the elements for a decade, houses roofs have collapsed and the muddy walls have become piles of mud. On the ground, weapons left behind by the Lizard tribe are rusted beyond recognition. The wild has almost completely take over this place.

"Hmm…"

I let out a small sigh while standing on the edge of the swamp. I pick up traces of Earth attribute magic.

The Lizard probably made their houses using magic, otherwise they wouldn't be able to withstand this kind of environment.

Harnessing the power of spirits and manipulating the element, the Lizard tribe is quite skilled. As a Dragon, I can change the elements with little to no effort. The same thing can be said to all Dragons, this does not only apply to myself.

Natural phenomenons in this world, the material world, is heavily affected by the spirits living in the Spirit world. The two worlds are connected to one another. I have no interest for that dimension. The scene in front of me right now shows the effect spirit activities have on this world. Around here, the Water attribute is weakened, and the Earth attribute has strengthened. This makes the swamp unbalanced and causes the surrounding to be muddy. While still looking, I remember that my father mentioned this place had a big earthquake. *Could that have changed the landscape to this degree?*

You could hardly call this a swamp anymore. It's more like a muddy field, yes, this is a mud field. If I use my power, this mud field will become a swamp flourishing with life again. But will people be happy to come back to a such a place? As far as I know, the Lizard's current lifestyle is going very well.

Right, should I go fishing by the river in the morning? After that I can restore this place to how it was after.

Which make me wonder, how did the Lizard tribe live here? Off of fish? I suppose, but once the fishing season ends, they will have to secure a new food source. *Life is hard in the north,* I think to myself.

Even though no demons attacked on the way, I must consider the chances and come up with countermeasures. Food and security, all of which can be discarded if one gave up on living. But this life is fun, there's no way I will abandon it half way.

I cross my arms and continue to think about what I should do, but then I notice the sound of a huge snake slithering from my side. It stops just before the bank of the mud field. I look at the serpent that stopped at the ruins of the Lizard tribe.

"Hou?"

I instinctively let out a small sigh of admiration.

She has long, straight, golden hair that is even more beautiful in the setting sun light. The position of her eyes, and nose is not short of perfection. If anyone else was to see this sight, they would no doubt say that it is the work of the most talented artist. With blue eyes shining like Sapphires. Wearing a white hooded cape and a simple pale blue dress while carrying a bag diagonally from her left shoulder. Showing a puzzle look on her face, she appear to be an innocent girl that is in her late teens. Her snake tongue kept going in and out of her red lips.

We stare at each other for a while, the girl's face is a head above mine judging from the distance. Her torso is that of a giant snake. Her snake body is covered with green scales. From the waist down near to the ground, a piece of dress covers it. Her snake body is bendy behind her.

I mutter "Lamia" to myself as I remember that she is a type of demon, but there is no way a demon with a face as beautiful as that could exist. I heard from the village chief that there

was once a demon who cursed the Princess of the Kingdom and she was exiled due to the fact that her appearance changed, and that the Lamia race are her descendants. I did not think that a Lamia would live around this place. But what defines someone as a demon? Is it their appearance? Is it their strength? Or is it what's in their mind? If so, then I must be the worst of them all.

For the Lamia race however, because of their strong ability to manipulate magical power, along with their powerful snake half, which can crush the bones of a fully grown adult Human with ease. A small village would easily be annihilated if even a single Lamia were to appear. To Humans, they are labeled as monsters. Rumors say that the upper-Human-half of the Lamia race generally has a very beautiful female appearance. This girl in front of me fits that description perfectly.

In addition to that, there is a feeling of female maturity being given off from the girl's body. Specifically from the coloring of her lower-body, the charm that's being given off of those green scales. I find her very attractive and it's hard to look away. It seem like my preferences are still that of Dragon/reptile base. With my experience in the past, I can tell exactly at which state she's at just from the shininess, the smooth curve, and the flexibility of those scales. Undulating scales are so attractive. In this case, the girl possess both Human and reptile beauty in her appearance. A Lamia may be the only race where I can give full points from of view of both a Human and Dragon.

After a while of awkward staring, the Lamia reveals a smile across her face and then she licks her lips with her long tongue, all the while giving me an uncomfortable look. With her lips now moist by her saliva, she's look even more attractive than before. Any normal mortal men, without exception, would be attracted to her. To me, that look she's giving me is making me feeling as if I am prey. In fact, Lamia only type of food is life force, specifically animal's life force. They keep their preys captive and feed off of their life force. However, their favorites are Human males. Most men who encounter a Lamia would most probably become her snack. In this Lamia's eyes, I am probably no different.

If it's my life she's aiming for, then I will give her one hell of a hunt.

"It is very foolish for a Human being to come here alone. Is there anyone else with you, I wonder?"

It is an incredibly sweet voice. It sounds like a melody sung by the best vocalist, it is as sweet as honey, such an ecstatic tone. The owner of this voice is none other than the girl in front of me, who has not even finished going through her puberty. She used a bit of magic charm while asking me that question. Such a trick is meant to help her with the capture of a prey, let it be animals or Humans. However, it sounds very generic. It's as if she is taking that phrase straight out of a book. In additions to that, the acting is good but it is still rough around the edges, her tongue can use a little more work. Nevertheless, her acting performance is being wasted if she's only using it to get food.

I answer her with a calm voice.

"There isn't anyone else here beside me."

"Is that so. That's good then."

After hearing my reply, she puts her hands on her ample breasts and give out a sigh of relief.

In this situation, as a Human, I should be scared for my life right now. Noticing that I am calm, the girl probably suspects that something is not normal. To my relief, the image of a Lamia in my head is completely blown away by the appearance of this girl. *Thank you very much.*

Then the girl asks me to state my business for being here.

I give her a brief summary of my travel, and that I come here to take a look at the swamp and plan to settle for the night nearby. While observing me, I can tell that she's wary, or I should say frightened towards me.

I appear to be calm, perfectly calm, even though it is a well known fact that Lamias are dangerous to Humans, as I stretch out my right hand and slowly place it on top of my sword handle. Noticing my movements, the girl fully reveals her frightened face and slightly recedes away from me. Seems to me that she has a weak personality and hates to fight. I get to know this Lamia more and more.

"Wait, I mean…"

Without waiting for her to finish her sentence, I pull out my sword and slash through a muddy arm that is connected to the earth behind me. The arm hits the ground and stop moving.

"…don't attack. Eh?"

It takes her a while to understand what just happened, and so I sheath my sword and show that I hold no hostility toward her. I then explain to her in detail what happened to the swamp, and how the elements are unbalanced around the area.

"The Lizard tribe lived here long ago, but they were forced to relocate after a disaster that struck their village. The strength of the Earth element around this area is abnormal, the spirit is going crazy and causing disaster in the Material world. It is possible that this may get worse. It was the correct decision that the Lizard leave the swamp."

While I tell the girl the story, a couple more arms extend out from the Earth, but I cut them down as soon as they surface. But it seem like the arms are being attracting to a strong magical power source. Utilizing my enhance senses, I try to look for a clue as to why the spirits are going crazy. I also try to tap into the magical network within the earth to look for the mad spirits. I suddenly feel that the ground beneath my feet is about to turn into a quagmire, my body instinctively jumps to the left of the Lamia.

"Huh, oh, what!"

The Lamia gets flustered instantly.

Fumu. How cute.

"Say, what kind of magic can Lamia use?"

I ask the girl while looking at her. The girl, snapping back from embarrassment, begin to think.

“Ermm. The people from my tribe are mostly people with Water affinity, a spirit of the Earth as an opponent is…”

Each element affinity or attribute of magic has its own interaction with one another. Earth attribute tends to work well against Water, which means the girl will have a hard time using her magic against the spirit. If going against Earth magic, then it’s common sense to use Wind magic to counter.

“Speaking to a Lamia as if we are the same. Wouldn’t it be hard for you to go against the Earth spirit with your power as a Human? Fumu.”

It’s seem like I am being looked down upon quite a bit. It’s not a lie to say that a sixteen year old Human boy with only flesh and bone cannot hope to win against a spirit.

Oh well. I thought, as I turn around and see the discouraging look on her face. On the ground are one, two, three…while counting it, I find it to be a useless action and cut the arms down.

“There is magic my tribe specializes in that will work against spirits, but it takes time to prepare.”

“Is that so. Alright, here’s the plan, I’ll be in the front line protecting you while you prepare to unleash your magic. I excel at fighting alone, if you join me in battle it would only be a hindrance.”

She nods.

Even though we’ve just met, with a formidable opponent to defeat, I recklessly propose such a plan. The time we spend talking to each other is short, but I believe that this girl is the key in solving the problem. At the very least, we hold no hostility toward one another.

To be honest, I only half expected an answer to come back.

“With that said, I offer you my gratitude in advance.”

“Those words are only to be offered in marriage.”

“Eh? Ah, oh, I apologies.”

She’s an amusing one. I thought that to myself, then start running toward the mass of arms sticking out of the ground.

The mud arms are only a part that are being controlled by the spirit of the earth. It is only a piece of the spirit. Without hesitation, I cut them down one by one, buying time for the girl. In order to cleanse the Earth spirit from its state of madness, there are several ways. But in this situation, we’ve decided to defeat the spirit and send it back to the Spirit world.

If the girl didn't show up, I was planning to forcefully inject my magical energy into the earth and lure out the spirit. After it takes the bait, I would defeat its physical form and release it to the Spirit world. That way would required me to put in a lot of magical energy, an amount that only the most well trained and talented wizard can muster. Or one of the Seven Heroes would also be capable of doing that much. It's not as if normal Humans can't produce magical energy, because they can, since their core is a soul and souls produce magical energy, but the rate at which Humans produce it is very slow.

To keep these arms off of the girl, I use a small amount of Dragon Class magic power and cut down the arms as soon as they surface. In a way, this feels like a game. But no matter how fast I cut them down, because they are supplied with magic from the spirit, these arms keep coming back for more. It's getting harder to keep up with this much power.

While fighting, I notice that an arm is approaching the girl in my blind spot but of course I know since my senses are enhanced. I never had a blind spot to begin with so this is nothing to be worry about.

I continuously dance in the battlefield and cut down all the arms that are in and out of my vision. Without taking a break, I press on and do my best to keep the attackers away from the girl. Eventually I start to wear down, since there are limits to the Human body, this is to be expected. But the arms keep coming and as long as they are, I will continue my duty.

Even though I boosted my physical strength with magic, this has become a battle of endurance. In the past, there was someone who fought me with basically infinite strength, and it was easy to go all out, but I am a little limited in this situation. Due the rate of which the arms keep popping up after getting cut down remaining unchanged, the girl's chant starts to make the spirit even more frenzied. The real fight has just begun.

"「I, the descendant of the Princess of The Kingdom, call upon the great Serpent God. Now is the time, grant me power so I may defeat my foes.」"

Long ago, The Serpent God, put a curse on a certain maiden, which changed her lower body into that of a serpent, and thus, she was exiled. As the girl continues to chant, a figure of a serpent begins to manifest on the muddy ground. Soon, the arms recognize the serpent as an enemy and start to shift their focus away from me. The serpent is so huge that it can swallow two or even three grown men at once. The arms are no match for the serpent. In addition to that, whenever the serpent touchs an arm, they get destroy and don't come back.

"Fumu."

I let out a small sigh.

With that kind of power, it surely is very difficult to maintain, much less control it. That magic the Lamia girl has at her disposal is more powerful than I anticipated. Despise that fact, this girl is not only maintaining it but continues to control it accurately. She definitely has the potential to become a great witch.

After a while, all the arms that attack the serpent cease to exist, turn into mud and fall to the ground. It was the right decision to ask for cooperation since with my current skill with the sword, to defeat all the arms would have been difficult. At the edge of my vision, I saw the

Lamia girl relax her shoulders. I would at the very least scan the area one last time before I relax.

“Do not let your guard down just yet. I have a feeling that the spirit may show us its true form.”

“Ah, yes.”

While I am being impressed by her performance, the mud steadily raises in the middle of the mud field. The surface is completely black, and it continues to grow to the size of a hill top. The berserk Earth spirit finally decides to show itself. This is likely the cause of that earthquake ten years ago, and what makes this swamp lack the signs of life. The reason why it so big and powerful is probably due to the fact that it sucked up the power of the water and land surrounding it over the last decade.

I suspected that those arms from before were just its temporary body, looks like I was right. Its current shape is that of a wobbly upper Human body made out of mud, that is around two stories high. There are some outlines that are indeed resemble a Human’s upper body. There are two holes near the top, I think those are its eyes.

The black mud figure starts to approach us with an astonishing speed. The pressure emitted by the spirit is quite intimidating. Especially toward the Lamia girl, its pressure is starting to affect her. If one is exposed to that thing for an extended period of time, they would gradually go insane. Even if the girl is to summon that serpent from earlier, it is unlikely that it will be able to defeat that thing. I stop for a bit and take care as to not strain myself, then run after the girl trying to hold her back as she shouts some stupid things.

“Let’s me go, that thing is no match for my spirit summon.”

“Ah, but it’s dangerous.”

The ground is very muddy and slippery, so I find it’s very difficult to run, but I press on. The berserk spirit approaches the bank from the center of the swamp and starts to fire mud balls at us. Those mud balls are filled with magic so getting hit by one won’t be pleasant. I dodge them with ease since they travel a little slow.

The spirit continues to fire off mud balls at me and I dodge every one of them. Some of the mud balls almost hit me. Looking at the spirit, its eyes are directly focused on me. I am its main target, that much I can guess. Each time a mud ball hits the ground, it would make a moderately big hole on the Earth. If this continue, the surrounding area might become an

open field when this is over. The quickest way to stop that thing is to destroy its physical form.

“The Serpent God’s poisonous fangs dwell in my blood. May I unleash its power upon my enemy.”

A familiar chant comes out from the girl behind me. Soon after, the familiar transparent serpent, once again, manifests in the Material world. Wasting no time, the serpent strikes the berserk spirit, trying to rip it apart. As those two fight, I see purple liquid oozing out of the serpent’s fangs. That must be the cursed poison. The cursed poison seem to be causing the berserk spirit to turn into a dense magical mass, and it starts to tremble in front of my eyes.

I am careless to expect the serpent to defeat that thing with poison alone. On the bright side, the berserk spirit’s movement speed has decreased greatly. As I am closing in, the berserk spirit lifts the arm that has been injured by poison, up into the air and slams it downward at me. Such a blow could have easily demolished a house, much less a Human body. Regardless of that, dues to its slow speed, I jump aside, and avoid it.

The Lamia girl lets out a small scream, thinking that I’ve been crushed.

Using my sword, imbued with magic, I cut off its left arm with a single slash. The sword, imbued with Dragon God Class magical power, becomes the best sword in existence. The arm that is cut off falls into the earth and turns into mud while losing its black color. While this lump of mud is still standing tall, I kick against the earth and fly up right to where its eyes are located. I know that, even though hollow, those eyes are looking at me very closely.

Your mind has been corrupted. The environment around here suffers because of you. I’ve made up my mind to send you back to the spirit world where you belong. I think to myself as I determine to defeat this thing. (T.L. Dran is a tree hugger.)

The berserk spirit starts to change a part of its muddy body into the shape of a spear and tries to skewer me. However, even while in the air, I am faster. As I pour more magic into my sword, it starts to glow, and with another swift slash, I cut the spirit into two.

“You did it!”

After I make my landing, I receive a cheer from the Lamia girl. After hearing that, I let out my favorite phrase proudly, showing some pity toward the spirit.

“Fumu.”

With that, I have successfully found and eliminated the cause of the disaster ten years ago. As for the natural balance around here, it will take sometime for it to restore itself. I will just have to let it follow its natural process. The body of the spirit is now split into two lumps of mud. When the spirit’s muddy body fell into the swamp it creates a wave of mud, and washes over the girl. As for me, I clad my body in magic, so the mud does not get onto my face or my cloth. The wave spreads and comes to a stop in about seven seconds or so. While my shoes get filled with mud and water, I start to walk back to the shore where the girl is standing.

“Uhh…Ue, I’ve gotten some mud in my mouth, and my clothes are covered with it.”

Unlike me, the girl is covered in mud, along with her golden hair, and her clothes are soaked. From my leather bag, I take out a leather flask, and hand it to her.

“Here, you should rinse your mouth with some water.”

“Oh, thank you.”

“No needs. Rather it is I that must give you my thanks. You’ve save me a lot of trouble. By the way, my name is Dran, I come from a village to the Southwest. It would be a pleasure if you would tell me your name.”

While holding the flask I gave her, she wiggles her lower body so that it fits into my field of vision, and bows while giving me her name.

“I’m Selia. As you can see, I am from the Lamia tribe.”

“Fumu, Selia. It’s a good name that you’ve received from your parents.”

Selia smiles shyly after hearing my words. She seems to be very pleased to hear a praise toward her parents, their relationship must be very close. It is a good thing that the parents and child are close. After living as a Human for sixteen years, that much I’ve understood. After we have put a lot of effort into solving the situation, it is only natural that I introduce myself. Part of me finds it troubling since this girl is, after all, from a race that is shunned by Human.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 3]

-Selia-

I endure the unpleasant feeling from the wet and muddy water covering my clothes and body, while holding onto the leather flask and rinse out my mouth. Dran who sees me in such a state, puts up a troubled look. Unlike me, who is suffering from the muddy water covering my body, Dran on the other hand, is completely dry from head to toes.

When I give him a curious look, he shrugs his shoulder and then gives out a small laugh. I wonder if I did something strange? Or is there something funny while I am rinsing my mouth?

"You should hurry up and get the mud off of you, or else you might catch a cold. You do have spare clothes right?"

Dran was telling me so as his eyes gestured toward the bag I am carrying over my shoulder. With muddy water covering the bag, I hardly think that the contents inside are actually safe.

But it's alright!

When I decided to walk through this swamp, I carefully wrapped food and clothes inside the bag just in case they get wet. And what do you know? It was very helpful to be prepared just for this occasion.

When I try to rinse my mouth one last time, and making sure not to be seen by Dran, I spit it out and wipe my lips quickly. Was that a bit too vulgar? My Mom might get angry if she see this.

"Yes, since there are places inside the Kobold's house, I can probably change my clothes."

After I said that with just a little bit of pride, Dran smiles again. It wasn't a strange thing to say so why does he laugh? Does this man have some ill-personality?

As I approached him in order to return the flask, he takes it while saying.

"Since Selia is different from what I had imagined what a Lamia would be like, it is quite interesting. Oh, and since when we met, Selia had putted up a puzzling look, but because of the circumstances, that had faded away. I think it would be a good idea for you to be more wary of Humans."

Hearing what Dran is saying, I agree with him. Dran is a Human. While I am a demon Lamia. A Human being scare of Lamia is a given, it wouldn't be hard to believe if Dran points his blade at me. After the fight with the Berserk Earth Spirit a while ago, I carelessly forgot what I shouldn't have. The truth is I did not intend to get so close and stretch out my hand to hand him the flask.

"Oh, er, please, I'm sorry."

While not knowing what to say, I apologised to Dran. Then Dran shrugs his shoulders. That gesture suits him very well.

Dran has bright, gentle blue eyes. With the same color of a day with clear sky, it is the color that helps calm one's mind. If you look at Dran's eyes, your heart and mind will no doubt be settle. I wonder why Dran didn't attack me when he could have easily done so. Does he have another motive?

"There is no need to apologies. I did not intend to cooperate with you either. Apart from that, finish changing your clothes."

Apparently, Dran is not going to tease me.

Since my parents taught me not to approach a man carelessly, this honest Human being is quite scary. Therefore, I am able to feel relief in Dran's gentle words and expression.

Now that both side have understood that there is no ill intentions, I can go over to the Kobold's house where I hid a change of clothes. Dran comes along with me of course. Nobody lives in this small Kobold village anymore, most houses have a collapsed roof, broken walls, no longer have a floor, and overall, it is not a very good place to live in. Still, I managed to find the cleanest looking house for me to hide my clothes and judging from the look of it, it must be the house of the village chief.

While I am changing my clothes and wiping the muddy water off of my hair, Dran is waiting outside the house. Even though I said this was the best looking house, the walls are partially broken and I am nervous that Dran might peep, but Dran stays outside and does not show any signs of checking out the house.

After I finish changing my clothes, I walk out to Dran with a bag that is covered in mud in one hand and a bag where I stored my other stuff on my back. When I see him, his gaze is directed toward the west. That reminds me that the sun is setting in the west and dusk is fast approaching. Because it is still early spring, even as the sun is setting, it is still early.

"It's bests to prepare the camp soon. I will prepare some food and then dry my clothes. My plan now is to camp here for the night. Selia, what's your plan?"

"I'm also planning to spend the night here. Because my whole family has a strong water attribute, this place, where water and earth mixed together, is strong so it feels comfortable."

When I say that the clothes might easily get wet, Dran looks back with a little troubled expression and walks away to look around the surrounding. In order to prepare dinner, fire is necessary and a place that is away from the wet ground would be better. I point at a tree that had fallen in the distance. It is not completely dried but it is dry enough to sustain a fire. After the sun sets completely, it will be dangerous if the camp is not set up, so it is best if both of us get everything done before that.

"Let's hurry."

"Yes!"

When I see that the food I brought from home is safe and that there is enough for both Dran and I, I feel a little happy. We set up the camp away from the swamp, where it's dry. There's also a large rock right next to the campsite, heat is radiating from the rock.

To sleep, all you would need is a sheet spread on the ground and a blanket. Also, we have a fire burning in the middle so it won't get so cold at night. At night, to keep the fire going, Dran and I will have to rotate to maintain it.

Lamia is a species that is weak to the cold. So, I curl up my snake body and put a blanket on top of it and also another smaller blanket for my human top. The blanket for my lower body is what occupied most of my luggage. It is very exhausting to carry it around because it is heavy, bulky, and big. But it is something that I cannot throw away because the night is cold. I get a glimpse of Dran while being inside my blanket, he is eating dried meat with vegetable soup, and sitting comfortably on a rock.

Normally, it is dangerous for a Human to set up camp after dusk and cook with fire because wild animals are usually more attracted to the fire than afraid of it due to the smell of cooking. However it is alright tonight because of my presence. In fear of the demon that I am, no wild animals will dare approach. At times, I feel very lonely knowing that no animals will approach me out of their own will.

While wrapped in the warm blankets, and laying close to the fire, I find it very pleasing to have someone to talk to after such a long time. It surprises me to the point where I wonder when did I want to start talking to another person. And so, I start telling Dran my side of the story.

I was born and raised in a Lamia tribe village in the mountain further North. A baby lamia is born between a Lamia and her husband, which is of another race, living in the village. Within the village, there is a law for a Lamia once she reaches the age of seventeen. At that age, she must venture out of the village to search for her husband. When I turned seventeen, I left the village and am now searching for a husband according to the law.

Lamia is a species with a special trait of being consisted only of women. Boys can also be born from a Lamia but the child has a 100% chance of being the same race of his father, no exception. Therefore, it had became necessary for a Lamia to take a partner from another race, but not just any male.

Long ago, the Lamia tribe originated from Humans, and was cursed by a God. The cursed ancestors of the Lamia passed down their curses to all Lamia, from part-snake body, to venom blood, sweat, saliva, etc. A Lamia chooses her husband base on whether he can withstand her poison or not.

If not, if I…let's see…yes..or..kiss him when we make children, he might die from the poison, and it would be a horrible death. (T.L. Poor guy, who ever it was, no death by snu-snu, and he was so close too xD) Uhhh, my face feels very hot. Because Dran is a good listener, I did not intend to talk about that subject carelessly. When my story is finished, the meal is also finished and the pot is empty.

It is a saying that the bond between an elder brother and a younger brother is strong and it each of them play a role in listening to another's story at home. In addition, I also mentioned that I'm good at taking care of the village's children with a proud attitude. But was it a bit childish? I feel like I was being rude toward him. Dran is sixteen this year and I turned seventeen not long ago, because of that, am I the older sister?

While I am holding the dissatisfaction to my chest like that, Dran is cleaning up the pot and spoons to put them away, all the while saying.

“When you’re puffing your cheek like that, you look so childish.”

“Oh, did something come out of my mouth?”

When I replied instinctively in a hurry, Dran is already laughing! My reaction must have been very funny.

“No, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make a fool out of Selia. It’s just that you look cute.” (T.L. I’m sorry if I made Dran look like a player but my conversation with girls don’t progress much further than a “Hello.”)

“I won’t be deceived by such flattery.”

“I am very sorry, I honestly did not intend to offend Selia. Please accept my apology.”

“Funda.”

“I think it is a bit troubling. For Selia to sulk…Oh dear! The way your navel is bending doesn’t look very natural, Selia?” (T.L. I wasn’t sure if he ask her this or “Do Lamia have a navel/belly?”)

I turn away still irritated by the way I’m being treat like a child. If I turn toward him, he’ll most likely shrug his shoulders and look at me as a spoiled child.

Mmmm, somehow I feel like I am acting more and more childish.

When I think back about it, what I said to him certainly made me look childish. Well…There is no way. If I rise a white flag here, I would be digging my own grave. Once again, I turn toward Dran’s direction and stare at him.

“It’s my loss. I’m childish, OK? As for my navel, it is because it’s where Lamia’s body starts to become snake-like.”

After I reply, I put my hands inside the blanket and wrap my Human part tightly. I wonder how long my legs would be if I was a Human woman. Every Lamia’s navels are the same, my mom, me, and everyone Lamia inside our tribe. After all, we are viviparous and not oviparous.

Wrapping in blanket still, I continue to talk about my parents to Dran. My mother, is of course a Lamia, and my dad is a Human. My mom travels outside the village and hunts, while my dad works on the field in the village, lastly, the housework is shared between three peoples including me.

“My mother once did what I am doing right now. Went on a trip and met my father, became a couple, and came back to the village. Fufufu, mama, and papa are a happy couple.”

Although I haven't find my "someone" yet, I am hoping that I will meet a good person and start a family just like my mother did." When my parents told me about their past, both of them had a sorrow atmosphere. Marrying a man of the Human race is easy for Lamia, but it not the same for a Human. Even if they love one another, there are obstacles ahead of them. I stopped asking about my dad's past after I realized it. My mom and dad love each other and it is not nice to bring them sadness.

"Is that so? A marriage between a Human and another race is practically unheard of. By the way, do you resemble your mother? I would imagine that she is beautiful."

"She is certainly a beautiful woman, but I don't exactly resemble her. If anything, I was told that my eyes and my personality is similar to that of my father. Why do you ask?"

"No, nothing important, I just asked out of curiosity. When I saw you back at the swamp, you had an amorous gesture, and charm was also used. Say, did you learn all of that from your mother?"

Uuu, I groan to myself after realizing that I was found out.

Although it is natural for a Lamia to temp the opposite sex, as it's a characteristic. My charm toward men seem to be poor. Although it is possible to use Magic(Demon) Eyes and put a spell on the partner, but all I can do is to charm others through smiling and making gestures. My mom gave me a detailed lesson before I left the village but that was all I managed to learned, I'm a bad student.

"Mother is very good! It is I that lack talent. I left while thinking that I will be able to manage somehow, but it seems that I am useless in this journey."

I'm starting to feel dejected, and Dran shows a gentle and caring face, just like my father.

"Don't blame yourself. We haven't known each other for even a full day, and even so, I think Selia is a very attractive woman. You are pretty enough just by being yourself. Along your journey, you will surely find your special 'someone'. I guarantee it."

I look into Dran's blue eyes, and I can tell that he is not lying.

Even though he is the first Human I met on my journey, I believe that I can trust Dran without a doubt.

My cheek turns red from hearing Dran's encouragement and compliments. I'm glad.

Dran goes to such extent to tell me those embarrassing things, I can't show him my shameful look.

"Uhh, You are flattering me again. But, yes. If you think so then it's good. I can definitely find a good husband, and introduce him to my parents."

"That's the spirit!"

Then it's Dran's turn to talk about his family. He tells me everything from his parent's favorite food, to how they celebrate his birthday. Dran's family have five people, his mom, dad, younger brother, older brother, and last but not least, himself. But it seems that his elder brother and he are already living outside of their parents' house. They don't need to go on a journey, unlike us. Even though he lives in the same village as his parents, to be separate, it must feel sad and lonely. I thought. (T.L. There's a difference between culture if you can't tell. :P)

"Don't you get lonely living alone, Dran?"

"I would be lying if I say no, but my house is near my parents and I could always give them a visit. Compared to me, I think Selia is more admirable. To leave your home, your village, and venture out into the world, all alone."

"Fufufu, It was something that I knew ever since I was little, so I mentally prepared for it. Beside, I get to go and find my husband with my own eyes so it isn't all that bad."

"Is that so? Selia is a strong child."

Dran replied with a kind smile.

♦ ♦ ♦

Looking at Selia's sleeping face while her whole body is wrapped in blankets and lying on the sheet laid on the ground, I take a breath, feeling relieved, and go to sleep. Trying to sleep, I realized that I became a lot more talkative as time passed. I look at the sky above, the moon is at the center of heaven, shining with a brilliant silver like it's the queen of the night sky.

I talk a lot.

Still, Selia and I haven't known each other for even a day yet, but she has loosened her wariness towards me and is showing me a peaceful sleeping face. If I was a Lamia in this situation, even after the cooperation against the Berserk-Spirit, I wouldn't easily allow myself to trust a Human. Anyway, she's already charmed me through her actions and talent in magic, however is that attitude something I shouldn't have toward my companion?

When we part way after this, Selia might encounter a Human who may very well point their blades at her. Can she protect herself? If I was her father, no, her father is probably worrying about her very much.

The father I loved very much is gentle, with no malicious intent, but all Humans are not the same so I feel anxious. Surely when other people look at my encounter with a Lamia, they would find it very humorous. I wouldn't need to worry if it were any other Lamia, but with Selia's personality….

Moving my gaze from Selia's face, breathing quietly, I look at the night sky. When I was a Dragon, the night sky was filled with stars, countless gems spread across the sky, but now, some of those gems seem to have disappeared. *What has happened to them? Did they live out their lives, destroyed by their inhibitor, or destroyed by invaders?*

It is only natural as time passes, yet I can't help but feel sad when lovely things disappear. But why does that matter? Even if stars on the sky blinked out, life on this Earth still flourishes as if nothing happened. I am thinking about a debatable subject and finding the answer is not worth the time, so I close off the sentiment in my mind.

Glancing back at Selia's sleeping face, the tip of her tail comes into my view. I suddenly have an urge to reach out and touch the tip of her tail. All the sentiments from a while ago disappear and all I can think of now is her scaly tail.

Then, the tip of the tail swings from left to right.

…

"Mmm, Kyaa."

Selia raises her voice in her sleep, her mouth shuts tight and her eyebrows move up. Her golden eyelashes twitch slightly, it feels like the snake princess could wake up at any moment. Selia's baby reaction is indeed very interesting, I continue to touch her tail while making sure she won't wake up. Under the moon, Selia's voice gets louder but it seems to be late, how regrettable, I was having fun too, but I'll have to stop here.

The next morning, the sun dye the horizon red, I make up my mind to leave the camp while Selia is still sleeping. Fortunately, Selia did not wake up when I was having fun playing with her tail last night. I couldn't get a good night sleep while thinking about the excitement I had.

Because Lamia is a cold blooded species, they won't be moving around very much until their body warms up. Thus, I feed more firewood into the fire, enough until Selia wakes up. I gather my blanket, pot, spoon and fork, and put them inside a bag, Then I put my knife inside its sheath and tie it along with my sword onto my belt. It would be bad if Selia wakes up and does not see me around, It's best to leave behind a note so she won't get upset.

This should do it.

I walk away from the campsite and walk through the place where the battle against the Berserk Spirit took place. All the traces of unnatural balance seem to have disappeared but there is a shining ore on the ground. The crystal is clear, if I remember correctly, this must be a Spirit Stone. It's likely that after the spirit was defeated yesterday, the stone materialized and dropped on the ground. The spirit accumulated magical power over ten years, and this crystal holds most of that power, it's also very high quality in and of itself. Because of the Berserk-Spirit that was here, no animal would dare to live in this place. However, when I scan the area, I see footprints of some wild animals. I decide to walk to the center of the swamp, the place is muddy still so I decide to walk on top of the water.

I use the Human magic I learned from the village's magician to interfere with the water so it can support my weight. I set my left foot onto the water, seeing that it's fine, I then move both of my foot on the water surface. Then I proceed to walk toward the center of the swamp.

When I reach the center, I roll up my sleeves, spread out my palm and direct it at the swamp. What I am trying to do now is to search to see if there is a Spirit present. I send out several waves of magic just to make sure.

After a while, I pick up signs of small life form, invisible to the eyes, living here. I wasn't expecting fish to be here already but, life is coming back to the swamp. It will take some time, that I am sure of. I am happy to see that there is no further complication.

Looking at the Spirit Stone I am holding, I have no need for such a thing. It would be best if the power within this crystal is use to sustain this swamp. Also, I pick up traces of other Spirit Stones. I collect them using magic. When I think back about it, many people view walking on water as a telekinesis ability.

Changing or controlling the weight of an object is the definition of telekinesis so there isn't much of a surprise there. I learn my magic from the magician family in my village, and they are responsible for my Human magic knowledge.

The Spirit Stone is giving off light even when at the bottom of the swamp. A few small pebbles float up to the surface where I am at. The light being given off of the Earth Spirit Stone is dim brown amber. Each spirit stone has a different color, for example a Water Spirit Stone is giving off a sapphire color. The normal size of a Spirit Stone is the size of a pebble, you can say that this Earth Stone with its size is very very rare. There are seven Earth Spirit Stones and four Water Spirit Stones, for a total of eleven. I wrap them in a cloth to dry out the water. This will do as a souvenir for this trip.

"Good morning Dran! Can you hear me?"

With her luggage all packed up, and on her back, Selia stops at the swamp bank and offers greeting. She waves her hands at me with a smile of her face. Our relationship has gotten very good even if it is only for a day. I walk to where she is, she has her hands clasped behind her back.

"Isn't that a Spirit Stone? Wow it's big!" (T.L. That what's she said.)

"It probably due to the fact that the spirit sucked up power around here for a decade."

Seeing the Earth Spirit Stone on my left hand, Selia lets out an admiration. Selia probably has seen plenty of Spirit Stones before, seeing this abnormal size Stone doesn't faze her in the least. She must have seen an even bigger one. Because she was a big help yesterday during the battle, it is only right that she deserve this Spirit Stone.

"Here, Selia."

I hand her four Earth Spirit Stones and two Water Spirit Stones. At first, she hesitates to receiving the Stones, but due to her weak personality, after I insist, she reluctantly accepts them. Because I've solve the problem at the swamp, there is no longer any reason for me to stay. If I want to head back before it is too late and tell Marco and the others what happened, I should leave soon.

"Hey Selia, I am going to return to my village now. What are you planning from here on?"

"Eh? I would continue to travel further South in search for a good husband."

“Fumu, even though I am friendly toward you, other Humans won’t be so tolerant toward a Lamia. Keep this in mind.”

“Yes, my parents warned me before too. I am happy that I met a kind person like you, Dran.”

“Selia is a very friendly girl, one that’s hard to come by. I hope that you will find a person you will be happy with. After all, the lifespan of a Lamia is much longer than that of a Human. I think you should spend sometime to understand Humans rather than rushing this matter.”

“Yes.”

Selia nod at my words, and I held out my right hand. Selia looking at my action with a surprised face, but she grasps my hand with a smile then immediately after, shows an embarrassed face. Her smile is beautiful, gentle and warm like a flower bud. Seeing the sight as a present, I fully transfer a portion of my spiritual energy through her warm and soft hand.

“Eek!”

I gave her the Dragon God class energy instead of Human’s and that surprises her quite a bit. When she was in her village, she no doubt only tasted the energy of a Human, the Dragon’s vigor energy is something she never expected. (T.L. She doesn’t know it’s the life force of a dragon. I think.)

Am I being too careless?

A look of satisfaction can be seen on Selia’s face as well as her tail moving wildly as she receives it.

“I’m sorry. I hope I didn’t surprise you too much. On your way back, I pray to the God that no misfortune befall upon you.”

“Oh, yes, Dran as well.”

“Thank you. I hope you will find a man of your liking. I’m rooting for you.”

We let go of each others hand, I step back, and start to head back to Bern. After a little bit, I look back and see Selia still standing on the same spot. I wave my hand at her, and she responds by waving back. I laugh and continue walking and Selia sees me off until my figure is out of sight.

A lovely Lamia, she was. (E.N. Is Dran talking like Yoda here?)

On my way back to Bern, I slay two larger bears that attack me. Other than that, the returning trip is normal.

Finally, I arrive at the village’s North Gate. Seeing that the two gatekeepers laughing and spitting jokes, I still cannot not get rid of my worries. Even though I parted with Selia, and also warned her of various things. I still can’t help but feel concerned for her. Given Selia’s abilities, she shouldn’t have any troubles fending off a group of bandits or such.

Don't worry ok? I keep telling myself.

Although we have a good relationship, there is no feeling of affection further than that. But I feel like I am completely attached to Selia. I do not know whether or not our paths may cross in the future, but it would be nice to meet her again.

[To be continued]

==========

Author's Words

That is all for now. Thanks for reading.

==========

[Chapter 4]

-Together-

It's a sudden story, but a race that was a Dragon and also used to living using magical power like it's their own limbs. One could say that none of the Dragon race has ever experienced a life without magical power. I can say that for Dragons, living without magical power is like a Human living without air.

Besides, I had lived since the Kojiro period where magic and mysteries filled the world. (T.L. The beginning of Earth basically.) Even if there are benefits in using magical power instinctively, as an incarnated Human, with it all, there is no real favor. I had, long ago, while being held in my parents' arms, decided to live my life as a Human, and so, all my life I have put effort into living as a normal Human being in this community. Nowadays, I've gotten used to living with purely Human capabilities, but when I was still a child, there were some difficult things that were incredibly tempting to use magic to solve, so I cheated a little. I also made sure not to reveal the fact that I can use magic to anyone, not even my parents.

For example, when I was a child, I played near this old Witch doctor's house where she makes common medicines, medicines with magical property, and many others including Elixir. (T.L. It originally magic potion. Elixir sound better.) As the name suggests, an Elixir is a product that has some sort of enchantment, unlike normal herbal medicine. Normally, medicines are made from medical herbs and some are simple enough that even a kid in Bern can produce it. But it is a different story when it comes to an Elixir.

An Elixir is very difficult to make. Only a person with a vast amount of knowledge, talented in controlling magical power, and who understands the different composition of mixtures can produce Elixirs. The Elixirs made by the Witch doctor, using the herbs I collected, were found to have a strong effect in curing diseases and various other enchanting effects, which were very useful. They also attract attention from travelers and peddlers to visit our village to buy or trade for the Elixir.

I believe that if my family is happy, I want to help others in the village to be happy as well, so little by little, I practiced making the Elixir that the Witch doctor makes. At my Human heart, it's full of adventures and curiosities. My soul on the other hand is of an old deteriorated Dragon, and it's rejuvenating, so to speak. Under these circumstances, I could not help but try. When one is in their youth, they should not be afraid to try something and fail at it.

When all the experiences accumulated after a few years, I've adapted to living as a Human. My total living experience as a Human is by no means less than when I lived as a Dragon. Knowledge of the past does not always carry over. When I imitated the Witch doctor in making an Elixir, I usually spend a lot of time thinking on how the magical power was used. When the analysis takes too long, my father would tell me "Don't try to imitate everything the Witch does."

Of course my father only said that because he's a farmer and knows next to nothing about magical power. Also he viewed imitating the old granny as a waste of time for me. The process of making the Elixir is extremely delicate work, the more experience and

understanding you have, the more successful you will be. However there is always a chance that the final product is not a life saving Elixir, but a deadly poison.

He was angry, and knocked his fist, with thirty years worth of fighting experience, on top of my head. My Father was angry because he yearned for me to behave like a child, but in essence, I act too much like an adult. After receiving the hit, I obediently listened to his sermon. During times like those, I felt their affection toward me, a little violent but you can call it tough love, and every time, instead of feeling apologetic, I felt joy. But there was an unexpected result in this failure.

When I was being scolded by father, the Old Witch happened to come across the Elixir that I was working on. Noticing that I was using a stone pot as a holder, a stone bar as a surface to grinding herbs, and a wooden stick as a mixer, instead of proper tools, she became depressed and told me that she will teach me how to prepare the ingredients. From then on, after I finished my work on the field, I would head to the old granny's house and was taught how to make an Elixir properly. The timing was also convenient for both of us.

I will challenge everything a Human is capable of.

With such an opportunity to learn Human magic from the Witch, I learned Human perception on magic and the ways they control and manipulate it ever since. Technically, every Human being has magic, but those who have enough magical power to exercise the phenomenon called magic are few. Unfortunately, no other villagers in Bern possesses the ability to manifest magical power beside the Witch's family and I.

♦ ♦ ♦

Several days after parting with Selia, I am working on my field trying to exterminate pests and weeds. After I finished, I walk across the bridge over the river that runs through the village at the southwest and visit the Old Witch.

There are five people living in the house, the witch herself, a husband and wife, and their three daughters, but one left Bern. Around the Witch's house, there are plants that are used to make medicine and Elixirs. The house has four bedrooms, as well as a bigger kitchen and storage than my house. Next to the house is a garden. In it, medical plants grow in a variety of shapes and sizes. It varies from grasses, to flowers, and trees.

The number of people who can cultivate these plants are the old witch, her daughter, her granddaughters, and I. Her son-in-law is the odd one due to poor magical capability. It's not like the Old Witch is monopolizing all the herbs, but when it comes down to a person begging for help at the door, her family is the only one that has the skills and ability in handling Elixirs. In addition to that, these are not normal herbs, they are plants that harbor magical properties. Wrong cultivation and mishandling, could lead to severe consequences. Since everyone in the village knows this, no one complains, and the witch is also providing medicine for a cheap price, anyone can purchase it. With that, the family of magicians earn a lot of respect from both the villagers and the village chief.

While walking through the house and into the back yard, I give a black cat with glossy fur a greeting at the door.

The cat lying on the stone floor open its eyes, revealing golden pupils, and returns a greeting.

"*Nyaa~*"

This Kitty in Black is one of the three familiars that the Old Witch has.

With that said, the familiar and its master's five senses are shared, even when they are apart. One should not underestimate this Kitty, despite the small size, it can easily rip a man's head apart, it may have some troubles with demons however. After losing its interest in me, Kitty closes its eyes and goes back to sleep. A cat is like a small child, it sleeps whenever it wants. Dragons also spend most of the day sleeping, it's a relaxing activity.

As I open the door to the yard, the mixed smell of many different plants waft through the door's gap. Drying flowers hung densely on rope strung across the ceiling. On the left side of the door, are shelves full of books. There are large, medium, and small fireplaces ready to cook the medicines on the right side. Also, on the left side of the fireplace are where the tools such as a pan, scissors, a hammer, a knife, etc. hangs.

A round table with chairs are placed in the center of the room. On the table, a set of tea cups and tea pot was prepared, and an old woman whom I came to visit is already waiting for me. The Old Witch is dressed in a reddish brown cape and a frayed skirt. On her waist, she has a leather pouch, and is wearing a pair of sandals. Her white braided hair is tied up with blue strings. Her eyes are green and her face has lots of wrinkles, but she always has a kind smile on her face. On the edge of the continent, this old Witch is one of the rare magicians that can produce an Elixir and is a master at medicine.

"Ah, so you've come, Dran-kun. For today's lesson, start by using detoxification magic on the mixture over there."

As she speaks, her lips only move slightly, it can barely be called speaking, but her voice sounds very firm and clear. I bow to her then proceed to sit on the chair across from her and start working.

You may ask why am I interested in the art of making medicine even though I can manipulate magic at will. It is simple, making medicine is one of the few things I find interesting and difficult enough to try and get better at. Beside, I never knew how to make medicine in the first place, so learning it will be useful.

Although for the Dragon race, most of us have never even heard of medicine, much less have a need it. With blessed magical power, we use magic to heal our wounds and illnesses, but even that rarely ever happens. In addition to a huge amount of magical power, a Dragon's natural healing ability and vitality are very good, if one receives a wound, they only need to eat, take a nap and once they wake up, the wound would've already disappeared. As for disease, they're virtually nonexistent for Dragons.

Because we live on the edge of the continent, we live in poverty compared to those living in the more central areas. Therefore, the tools for making medicine are not well made or developed.

In my previous life as a Dragon, I knew nothing about Human medicine. All my knowledge regarding medicine and Elixirs are due to the Old Witch's teaching.

Even when learning, helping her make medicine is always the priority. It is always in high demand. I help her collect, prepare the herbs, and while applying her teachings, I correctly prepare the ingredient with the highest quality and efficiency. I want to ensure that whoever receives the medicine from the witch will have their needs fulfilled. As a student under the Witch, I have a huge lust for knowledge. Therefore I treat the medicine with utmost importance.

The session with her ends at noon. I respectfully bow to my teacher and am about to head home, but then I see Airi's small figure dressed in an apron, with a red face peeking through the door. Little Airi is dressed in a blouse and apron, she tilts her head and gives me a puzzle look.

Airi is the smaller of the pair of sisters currently living in the house. Despite being young, she is one of the candidates to inherit the family business so to speak. She's also a fellow disciple under the guidance of the Witch. With my current medical knowledge, she probably knows even more than I do. The ten year old girl already knows how to formulate magic to some extent, and also trains in using magic for combat.

I've also gained actual fighting experience the same way the children in the village do; by working with the Kobold and Goblin tribe who already use magic, which I've already done twice.

"Dran-senpai, eat lunch with us."

"It's indeed lunch time, but I am afraid I will bother you."

"No, you won't bother me. Beside, we learn the same thing from grandmother and have became close. I've already cooked extra rice for Dran-senpai. If you don't have lunch with us, I will be troubled when there are left-overs."

With her eyes looking at me deeply and her hands held tightly in front of her small chest, I've already lost the argument. It seems like I will have to entertain her at lunch. It's not like I dislike having a meal with Airi and her family, I feel grateful towards her, but I find it a little troubling to interfere with the precious time a family spends together. Airi bends her eyebrows and is looking at me, impatiently waiting for a reply, and my silence seems to bother her.

While I am lost in thought, my teacher, rocking in her chair said.

"As Airi said, Dran-kun, have lunch with us. That's an order."

There was no need for you to say so, master.

I shrug my shoulders and surrender. As soon as Airi sees that, she lets out a bright smile.

Fumu. If you were to see this smiling face, all of your reason would cease to exist.

“Thank you, Oba-sama. You better hurry up and come along Dran-senpai. I’m waiting for everyone to gather.”

Well, if it must be so. Having a meal itself is something to be glad about. Ever since I left my parent’s house, I’ve been preparing my own food. Having someone else make it once in a while is nice.

Airi and I lend a hand to help master get up from her chair, hand her a cane, and go to the dining room. From inside the house, the black chimney rose up, letting smoke up into the air outside.

With the faint aroma of food wafting through the air, my nose picks up the scent of many appetizing delicacies.

A rare chance for a feast. I thought to myself, following the aroma.

We arrive at the lunch table, and soon after, the entire family has gathered. On the long table lies, potatoes topped with butter, freshly baked brown bread, fresh salad, and on the tri-large crocodile fangs, a boiling stew of rabbit meat with the eggs of a Dodo bird. This set up would make anyone’s stomach growl and ready to dig in.

Sitting around the table are Airi’s mother, Dina; a witch doctor, her husband; Airi’s father and the Witch’s son-in-law, Doruga. Airi’s older sister, Risha is also present. Risha turned nineteen this year. In all rights, she should be the one to inherit the family’s business before Airi, but due to having no ability to utilize magic, she decided to become a soldier for the kingdom and not a doctor in Bern. Unfortunately, the knowledge of how medicine and Elixir are made has not been past down to her either. Therefore, her mother Dina, and her grandmother are training Airi as their next heir.

Before anyone starts eating, we put our hands together and give our prayers to the Earth Goddess, Mairahl, who provides them with ingredients for cooking and food. The Earth Goddess Mairahl is someone whom I thought of as my close friend in my previous life and also someone who bears the responsibility of fertilizing the earth itself. Her figure in a Human’s mind is that of a pregnant women with straight long black hair, and a gentle appearance. Her faith is the highest on the continent. Her personality is also very merciful and tolerant. In my opinion, such a Goddess deserves the Human’s belief.

Even though I say that we are close, deep down, I wonder if it is all just in my head?

Dina-san, who made the food, has a mysterious feeling to her. She’s very quiet in whatever she does. Anyway, I also offer my prayer out of practice. When everyone finished praying, Dia-san gives the OK signal to have the meal. By the way, the power ranking in this family goes like this. Old Witch > Dina-san > Doruga-san. Even though Doruga-san cannot use magic, if it is medicine, he can be considered the third most knowledgeable person in the field.

Dia-san is a woman who already bore three children. Despite that fact, her figure is still very well preserved. With red curly hair reaching down to the middle of her back and a proportionate body, most people would never have thought she’s a mother of three. Her

personality is also very gentle. Rather than scowling or hitting, she talks to her children and solve everything with words.

Doruga-san's appearance is that of a strong and muscular man. The width and thickness of his chest is huge compared to me. When he stands up straight with legs apart, it looks like there's a wall in front of you. He's intimidating. Hard muscles cover his chin, and with raven black hair, a mustache, and a sharp gaze, he looks very much like a leading fighter of the village.

Risha has a soft atmosphere to her. Her wavy black hair reaches her waist, inheriting many of her mother's features, narrow waist, and all the curves in the right places. Especially her big chest and well-rounded buttocks. Her smooth skin at night when the moonlight shines on her creates a surreal scene. I've only seen her once or twice during night time when demons attacked.

This mother and daughter duo is set to be number one or two in popularity in the village compared to other girls due to their beauty and kind nature.

Which leads me to Airi. She's the smallest child here, with a figure nothing like her older sister and mother, what a mysterious species. With that said, Airi's appearance is plain. Nothing about her looks out of the ordinary. All those foolish boys who pointed this out in the past and made fun of Airi had been beaten to a pulp by Elise's strong arm. Elise is scary when she's mad, although she only gets mad on Airi's behalf. (TN: Elise is the sister who left home.) I am smarter than that, by saying "Airi still has room to grow." I've created a margin big enough to not get hit.

I eat using the wooden fork that was provided for me. Whenever I reach out to try new food, Risha would ask how the food tastes with a smile across her face. Plus, sitting on my left is Risha and on my right is Airi.

"Dran-san, How does the food taste? I hope you find it to your liking."

"It is delicious. I apologize for not mentioning it to Risha."

All the delicious looking dishes lined up in three rows on the table, I can only stare.

What is with this grandeur display?

Just now, I lose my restraint on the food due to its magnificent flavor. It's a bad habit I should keep in check. This year, I have a lot to reflect upon, but on the bright side, I get to experience all of these crazy tastes. Until I die as a Human, I will never get tired of tasting different flavors.

After I gave my answer, Rishi laughs teasingly at me from behind. While looking back, Airi is looking at me with cute eyes. After a brief moment trying to understand the situation, I try to look at Risha for explanation but it is to no avail. Soon, Airi brings out another stew and serves it to me, while her cheeks are redden.

"O…Onee-chan!"

Although Airi is sending a protest at Risha, she slowly hands me a plate with the soup from the stew she brought. After she handed it to me, she goes back to her seat on my right, and stares at me. It would seem like she prepared this and it's also the reason why I saw her wearing an apron earlier. I have no choice but to give it a try.

"Oh? Did Airi-chan make this today? It is very delicious. Thank you."

"Yes. I was afraid that it's no good and that you will not even try it."

Airi replied, with her face facing away from me, in a low voice, trying to hide her embarrassment. Either ways, it's cute.

"There's no way I wouldn't try it."

The fact that Airi went ahead and prepared this for me alone makes me very happy. When I look around the table, Doruga-san has a bright smile on his face looking at Airi, while the rest of the family smiling at both Airi and me. Dia-san rests her elbows on the table and crosses her fingers, looks at me and asks.

"Dran-kun. Is there a girl you like in the village, Dran-kun? Do you have a girl whom you want to marry? You are at that age after all, it's not too soon to think about it."

I sit up straight, cross my arms and think about it seriously because what Dia-san said is not a joke. But my Dragon's soul's intuition never considered such a thing. My current body is that of a Human, I do possess many desires, but when it come to love, I am at a loss. Not because there is nothing to love but I simply do not know where to start. I may certainly fall in love with a female Human, for it is from love that a family is born. Wait a second, Doruga-san's gaze, as sharp as an arrow, directing straight at me. Did I do anything bad? No, no, it is not difficult to sympathize with Doruga-san's action base on what is going on in this room.

In an attempt to try and see what that life is like, I focus my mind to envision the face of a girl in the village and every action that could happen. Both embracing the feeling of love, and willing to share one another's pains. It would be wise to choose someone who you will want to spend your happy moments with rather than pains. (T.L I think he just visualize a marriage and decide what he should do. Is he a f*cking quantum computer?)

"I've given it some thought, but it is still a difficult decision after all. After all, it has only been a year since I became independant, and there are also no words of encouragement to get marry from my parents neither."

Dia-san and Doruga-san both nod at my reply, and stop giving me the threatening look. Seeing that, I feel relieved.

All the while the Old Witch is laughing "Hohoho."

Even though I replied seriously, somehow, I feel like I am a clown of some sort.

"Hehe, Dylan is already married, and you, Dran-kun, on the other hand are saying that you have no interest? It is regrettable, but it seem like I've been rejected by Dran-kun."

Risha puts her hand on her right cheek and gives out a disappointed look. Her face and the tone may sound disappointed but I can definitely hear a sound of laughter from her. Along with the soft atmosphere, Risha also carries a habit of mocking my older brother and his wife.

“I like Risha-san, but to be frank, I cannot call it a feeling of love.”

“I wonder? I do like Dran-kun very much, if you take me, then I will do my best for you.”

“Ufu, It’s no good, Onee-chan!!”

Airi stands up from her chair violently and raises her voice to protest against Risha.

Fumu. To be raising her voice, Airi sure is worked up today.

While I tell myself that, in reply to Airi’s protest, Risha simply giggles, as if to enjoy the situation. Seeing that, Airi puffs her cheek and sits down quietly.

“In front of Dran-kun, Airi is really cute, I just couldn’t help but tease her.”

“Onee-chan!!”

While Risha continues to tease Airi, slowly but surely, all the dishes are getting cold so they should stop soon. Fortunately, they stop soon after and everyone chats peacefully with each other, and I am able to enjoy the meal in peace as well. This time, Airi decides to attack via my stomach, so it’s best not to displease her. It is nice now, but what am I going to do when she is grown up?

After I finish eating, I say goodbye to the family and head home.

While going up the river, I have a fish basket, a fishing rod, and a sword on my belt. Even though I just had lunch, I figure that tonights dinner will be fish so I decided to go fishing.

My destination is the Northwest of the Belen River that flows through Bern. I can catch fish anywhere but further upstream, away from the man-made canal and farm lands, the fish are much bigger, with more fat. The Belen River goes deep inside the mountain range so I decide to stop at the northern side of the river, a little outside of Bern, in the forest.

Here in the dense forest, trees block and absorb all the sunlight even though it only early afternoon. The green forest sucks up nutrients and water from the earth, combined with sunlight, there is no better habitat from that. There are often wolves, wild boar, poisonous reptiles, and other dangerous creatures in the forest, but Humans are dangerous for them. If I avoid their turf, there will be no need to fight them blindly.

To grasp their territories, I pay close attention to the marks on branches, tree trunks, feces and urine that they left behind. Eventually, I safely arrive at the river bank. With the bird’s chirping and singing, the natural sounds make me conscious that life thrives here.

Today, my goal is to catch a fish call Sharlote the size of an adult arm. It has black spots on its sharp looking mouth, silver skin cover its body and has plenty of fat. It can be cooked in many different ways, baked, boiled, smoked, grilled, etc. It doesn’t matter how it is cooked, it

is going to be a mouth watering treat either way. Considering the size of the basket I brought with me, it should hold up to five fish. The extra can be stored for later. However, Sharlote is extremely difficult to fish with a fishing rod so I will have to cheat a little.

The tree branches spread out so wide that a green color reflects on the river's surface. While putting the fishing rod in a secure place and have it hang over a place where I sense the fish flow, I suddenly pick up the smell of burning wood in the wind. The smell of burning wood is unique, there should not be any Humans living inside the forest. By any chance is a Goblin or Orc nearby? If I consider this seriously, it might be a little dangerous.

Unlike dangerous wild animals whom even the Goblins and Orcs avoid. When it comes to Human, these wild Goblins and Orcs will attack and kill Human without hesitation. Unless they outnumber the Goblins and Orcs or when they are injured. Before anyone from the village comes here without knowing so, it is better that I eliminate this threat.

I make up my mind and stop fishing, grab my sword, put it on my belt and head toward the direction the smell is coming from. Judging from the smell, the location is not far from the river.I approach the place on high alert, careful not to step on a dead branch and make a sound.

I am prepared to cut down any wild Goblin or Orc, but if this fire was started by a Human. They better have a good excuse for their stupidity. I have my hand on my sword handle, ready to draw it out at a moments notice. With sunlight glittering through the trees, I arrive at the location where I smell burning wood. I can't relax due to nervousness. Then, I recognize the person who lit the fire. What I am looking at right now is a creature with a Human upper body and a lower body that of a huge snake wrapped in beautiful green scales. There is only one species that exist with such an appearance, Lamia. What's more, she is the girl I just parted with a few days ago…

"If it isn't Selia-san."

"E…Eh?"

To prove that I am correct, Selia involuntarily, turns her back at me with a bewildered look on her face.

Looking at the steaming pot on the fire, it seem like Selia lighted the fire to boil some water to clean herself. If I was her in this situation, I would just dip myself in a spring or the river to clean myself, but it must be cruel for Selia because the river is still cold around this time. She would certainly get sick, after all, Laimas are weak against the cold, more or less. However, it would cause Selia's unpleasantness if she doesn't remove the dirt off herself. With the water, she is wiping her body right next to the fire. By the way, I think that anyone would understand what I am implying. Selia is **wiping** her body, so naturally she doesn't have any clothes on. That stark naked appearance. Despite the fact that it's still a bit chilly, due to the warm towel that she is using, she doesn't seem to be shaking.

"…Oh! It's Dran-san."

She raises her voice in the unexpected situation of me being here, and then a small yelp escaped her lips after noticing that I see at her naked body. It was just when Selia was about

to wipe her neck so her long golden hair is pulled to the side revealing the nape of her neck. So, in response to me at first, she turned her body although I've already gotten a glimpse of everything, mostly. She is still trying to cover up her body.

While wet, the sunlight reflects off her scales dazzlingly, and I find it very sexy. Her breasts are a size that would fit in my palm, under the sunlight they shine from the wet skin, creating a very erotic scenery. Everything seems to fit her perfectly, it is like the most beautiful piece of artwork I've ever seen. Her waist line is narrow, that is also where her Human-body starts to change into a snake-body, all of which I can see clearly in detail. Her white belly under the sunlight is also exposed to me, every place a woman should hide, is being exposed to me. Somehow I feel very lucky to witness this sight.

Right now, the figure of a beautiful girl, from a race that was cursed by God with a half Human and half snake body, which could be straight from a painting, is all mine to gaze upon. To me, it seems like Lamia possess more natural beauty, rather than a called a curse. I wonder why Humans think they are a cursed race? Everything from her gestures, to her golden hair that shone as if it were real gold, truely beautiful. Her figure, ever since we met, I already found it beautiful, deep down in my heart. So I let out my admiration unconsciously.

"Fumu, you're beautiful."

Due to my poor vocabulary, I can't seem to find better words to say. So I said what I felt was right.

"I am happy to be praised by you, but please stop looking all dignified!"

She took my compliment but it seems she doesn't like it when I see her directly. After telling me off with an angry voice, she has her arms crossed over her chest and private to hide them. All the while having a red face. Overall, there are only small portions of her body that are hidden from my eyes.

"It's a shame. Such a beautiful sight. It will not decrease in value even if it were to be seen, you know?"

Selia coils her body around her and peeks at me with her face completely red, all the way to her ears. At this point I am not sure if it is from embarrassment or anger.

"Please, at the very least, feel some embarrassment! And what is with that dignified face you still have on!?"

"Well, it is only natural instinct of all species, including me to be attracted by beautiful things. It's not bad to look at pretty things. After all, Selia-san is very beautiful."

"I will not be deceived by your flattering! Please face the other direction for a while!"

Selia used magic in that last sentence, there seems to be more force put into it than last time, so I turn my back to the other direction. Everything I said about her completely reflects her features, not a single lie. Still, it was a magnificent sight. It's like candy to my eyes.

While Selia is changing clothes, I go back to the river bank and wrap up my fishing equipment. Upon returning, I am planning to ask why she is in such a place. After Selia finished changing, I sit on a rock next to her, where she is coiled up. Observing her, I see the embarrassment from being seen naked remains. If I'm not careful with my words, I may really be turned into cider.

I sit on the rock and position my line of sight onto the river's surface instead of looking at Selia. I am not sure how to act embarrassed or troubled, but if I don't try, I would look like a bad person.

"Why are you at such a place? I thought that you would go somewhere further south, where there is a bigger Human population, rather than this outskirt of the continent."

I didn't intend for my question to be offensive or in a demanding tone, but somehow, I couldn't control my tone and it sounded like I am interrogating Selia.

"I thought that, that's what I would do, but…"

"What's the matter?"

"It's just that you told me that other Humans I will meet may be scary, so I…"

"Somehow, when it came down to making a decision, you hesitated. You ought to be prepared for it."

I was going to tease her, but I feel as if I would pay a high price in doing so.

"It is certainly the case, and in this case, I have nothing to say. When I was all alone, I thought of the time I spent with you, I was lost in various ways, and I simply wanted to meet you again. Thinking that maybe Dran-san would guide me."

"You were looking for me? I wanted to meet you again as well. I am glad we could meet again like this."

"Do you really?"

"Yes. It's true. Hmm…maybe, say Selia-san."

"What is it?"

I can feel her gaze looking at me with intensity. I am not sure that my suggestion is going to turn out better or worse but I say it anyway.

"Do you want to come and live in my village? Doing so would help you familiarize yourself with Humans faster. Maybe I can arrange a favorable location so that you can live there. Although it may not seem like it, my village is but a small province on the continent. The people living there have a high tolerance towards other races. It may take a while for you, a Lamia, to adapt to living there, but in time, I am confident that they will accept you. Especially you."

“I am going to live in Dran-san’s village?”

My suggestion seem to gives Selia some courage, but I, honestly, am about to burst out laughing at her innocent reply. After all, it’s her personality that may allows this to work.

“That’s right. You can live in the village. We can spend our time happily as well.”

While waiting for her to answer, Selia lets out a smile on her face, a sign of trust. Before such a smile, any man would have given her everything and do anything to keep her smiling. There is no denying that this Lamia girl’s smile is wonderful.

“I think, if it’s with Dran-san, it would definitely be fun. You are very kind…really.”

“Is there something else that bothers you? Please tell me.”

“The truth is that…when you gave me your spiritual energy, it was really delicious, completely different from anything I’ve ever had, and since then, I could not consume anything, so…I was expecting a little…”

So that’s why. Selia confesses her gluttony in embarrassment. What I gave Selia last time was a portion of Dragon God class spiritual energy and not a normal Humans, what never crossed my mind was that she would become easily addicted to it. It would seem that Dragon God class spiritual energy is too much for a Lamia, she may never find any other source of spiritual energy tasty again. It’s sure is troubling.

“Is that so? Since we are going to live together, I can give you energy anytime if you ask for it. Here, give me your hand.”

I hold out my left hand and Selia grasps it with her left hand, squeezing mine and looking ashamed. I let a portion of my Dragon energy flow into my arm and let Selia absorb it slowly. As she is taking it in, her expression changes from shame to full of ecstasy and lets out cute sounds.

“Funya…nya…”

The Dragon race not only has strong physical capability but also overflowing vigor. In fact, it is said to be the strongest spiritual source of power of any species. Any species who depends on consuming spiritual energy to live, once they’ve taste a Dragon’s energy, there is no way for them to forget it. It is that tasty. It is not an exaggeration that Selia, a Lamia, is behaving like she is now. Besides, even if Selia manages to find another Dragon and absorbs its energy, it still wouldn’t satisfied her due to the fact that my energy is the highest grade among the Dragon race. Now that I think about it, are there any other ways to transfer spiritual energy from one person to another without having physical contact? I like to look at Selia’s snake body twitching like this, I wonder if it’s a good thing or a bad thing? I will reflect on this later.

Anyhow, I wonder if everybody in the village is going to approve of Selia living with us. After all, it’s something I thought of just a few moments ago. While walking back to the village, I think about what to do thoroughly.

Selia was born and raised together by a Lamia mother and a Human father, and has developed a unique personality, not that I am saying there are any two people that have the same personality.

It will be difficult for her to live near so many Humans, not because of her personality but because she is one of the demon race, a Lamia.

Everyone knows that Lamia prefer Human energy, so even if she doesn't attack anyone, there will be fear lurking inside everyone in the village. Even so, if she needs energy, I will be the one to provide it for her, so no one else will have to be troubled. However, there is also the fact that Selia musts show that she is beneficial to the village, or else she will always be treated as an outsider.

Although the children, with Selia's personality, will surely get along well with her. Having a Lamia as a friend is obviously very nice. It is easy to show off her strengths. First off, she has strong magical power, possesses an undeniable charm, combined with charm Demon Eyes. With that, she can solve conflicts peacefully. Next are her physical abilities. She has poison naturally flowing through her veins, and her strong snake body can easily snap the bones of a Human adult with ease. Overall, she is a powerful ally. All of those abilities are easy to find in books after all, and of course there is always a chance that she may use her power against the people living in the village. Maybe I should suggest that they can hire her as a guard or something.

She is very beautiful so it won't be a problem with the men, but the women will be problematic. It wouldn't help her one bit if she uses magic and takes the easy route. Her snake body should shed its scales once a year or so, and when it does, I can apply magic onto them and make some magic armor. Even though the amount of armor that can be produced may be low, magic armor can be sold for a decently high price. And when the Demons attack, we can mix her poison with the mixture of wild grass and toadstool so it increases the efficiency of her poison, allowing it to affect the Demons faster. I think about each and every way to make the villagers accept Selia, even though what I am really good at in the village is everything that has to do with farming.

Hmmm. While deep in thought, a female voice snaps me back to my senses.

"Oh, Dran-kun! What's the matter? What are you thinking about?"

When I look back, a woman around mid-twenties, calls out to me.

The womans name is Miu, she has brown, shoulder-length hair, and is wearing a red linen dress. Her breasts are huge, the largest pair in the village. They are easily bigger than the head of a baby. In that dress, it seems like the fabric would give out at any moment. But it's nothing out of the ordinary because even though she is living in Bern, she is not from the Human race.

Miu belongs to a Beastmen race, a cowwoman to be exact. Her cow ears are sticking out of her head cutely. Her tail is located just above buttocks and it's the length of my arm. As a race, the cow people are genuinely peaceful and kind in nature. From the waist down, their legs are covered with fur, and of course they don't have feet but cow hooves. And speaking of which, the Cow-woman have an excessive amount of milk whenever they are not pregnant,

so all of the milk that the villagers drink is from them. Miu is no exception of course, she does indeed produce lots of milk normally. Also, there were times when I was little, I breast fed off of Miu's breasts instead of my mother's. Even now, I occasionally find myself drinking her milk at my dining table.

The Beastman race also has enormous enduring strength.. Even Miu here can perform the workload equivalent to that of a Human and his horse combined.

Originally, Miu was a woman who lived in the city of Galois located in the far south of Bern. While she was on a business trip, she met her husband and they decided to get married and moved to Bern. Adding that into consideration, her true age would be in the late 30s, and she already has a son who is twelve years old and a daughter who is fourteen this year. Speaking of which, it should be right about the time that her daughter starts to produce milk as well.

Beastmen also have a longer lifespan than Human so they tend to have lots of kids. The current food supply for Bern is excellent, so a dozen more children will not be a big deal. The history behind Human and Beastmen relationship is long and full of conflict. It may not look like it if I take Miu as an example, but long ago, and even now, the Beastman race is a race that is widely discriminated against. So Miu being here isn't exactly a "free" person, she has a family, but on papers, she is her husband's slave. As for the Kobold and other races working with Bern, they have a common goal, which is to survive against the Demons. They are forced to work together to survive and in doing so, they started to understand each other and were able to form a bond of trust. But more or less, this is how it is, the Beastmen were just being bad mouthed, and were treated violently.

In Bern, beside Miu, there are one or two other Beastmen, who are acquaintances of Bern villagers from a long time ago. However, the subject about discrimination against the half men, half beast is never a hot topic because everyone in Bern knows that whatever rumors that spread across the land are lies. The fear of races that are not purely Human is something that the Human ancestors made up, and it has caused many to suffer, more or less, Miu and Selia were both affected one way or another.

Unlike Miu who is welcome here, it will be completely different if I am to bring Selia into the village with me, assuming she can be allowed to enter the village in the first place.

When I was a Dragon, I never bothered to think of such trivial Human society behaviors. Take Miu for example, I would just be staring at her indifferently. People will definitely make a big fuss about it. Maybe I should ask Miu-san for help since she went through the same thing at some point. I think of how sweet Selia's smile was and it makes me do whatever I can to please her.

Then I notice that Miu is staring at me dumbfounded, moving her ears up and down, and her slim tail side to side. She looks adorable. This is too much for the lonely men in the village. No one dares to approach her due to her husband's threatening look.

"Alright then Dran-kun, you better get going. You have training to do today."

"Ah! Is that so, Miu-san? Thank you for reminding me."

The training Miu-san was talking about is live combat against weak Demons or wild animals that live outside of Bern, in order to practice fending off the Demons. The training is organized by soldiers who set out to train adults and even children to fight, because everyone helps a little against the Demons. Normally, the training starts when a kid reaches ten years old. I learned how to handle weapons and traps since I was ten. When the village is under attack, it is better to have children who can fight with bow and arrows, a spear, or a sword, rather than cowering in a corner trembling. Some people would call this coldhearted, but because of what life is like around here, we have to do everything in order to survive. Those people would never have thought that children can be organize as a military force, but they can be, like I was.

The menacing Demons will attack an adult as fiercely as it would towards a child, and they show no mercy. As such it is essential for children to learn the art of war, so they can fight for their own survival.

Demons will continue to attack a village that has a weak defence force and will do so until it is razed to the ground. They avoid having to fight with the strong, if possible. It's a fine strategy. I am already sixteen this year, and belong to the front line. I will set a bad example if I am late.

I start running toward the practice area immediately after saying goodbye to Miu. It is a bad habit of mine to not pay attention to my surroundings while deep in thought. Each step I take toward the practice site, the more I think about how to arrange for Selia to live in the village.

Today, I really want it to work out soon.

"Take care~~!"

I wave my hand while continue to run, knowing that Miu-san is also waving at me.

Fortunately for me, I make it in time for the meeting at the North Gate. When I arrive, I notice that my brother is here as well. I guess today is also the day that he has to come. My older brother, Dylan, sees me coming, and breathes out a forlorn sigh.

Dylan is my older brother, he resembles my father a lot, with well built muscles and a good looking face with short back hair. In the family, Dylan resembles father while Marco and I resemble our mother, but I consider such a thing to be of no use. My brother carries a bow and arrows on his back, in his hand is a spear, and he has a wide blade hanging on his belt. (T.L. Machete?) He obtained it the last time a group of wild Goblins attacked.

"Hey Dran, it's nice that you aren't late, but you kept everybody waiting."

I reply while nodding at his words.

"I'm sorry."

I lower my head slightly, but my brother doesn't seem to be angry at me anymore. It has always bothered me that our brotherly relationship is different from that of others in the village. If I have the chance, I would like to look into what my brother is thinking. Even if I say that, I would never do so because I respect other people's privacy of their own thoughts. I

don't find it unreasonable to be concerned of our relation. After all, he has known me for the last sixteen years. Does he hate me? For as long as I remember, during the time I spent with him, he has always treated me well, but somehow, he seems to be avoiding me. I really don't want him to hate me.

"Listen up! Everyone has already gathered here."

The soldier announced. Since I didn't see anyone else come after me, I must be the one that was holding everybody back. For this training exercise, two or three adults would lead a group of six or seven children outside the village to train. In my group, I am teaming up with Albert, my childhood friend, and my brother.

The one leading this exercise is Commander Balin, who holds the highest authority over the soldiers stationed in the village. In addition to that, Ramese Retisha, a priestess of the Earth Goddess, Mairahl, is also here to oversee our activities. There are more important people than usual. Maybe it has something to do with the fear that more Gobins have been showing up lately.

Originally, Commander Balin is from Bern, and he quickly climbed up the ranking. Right now he's wearing a very sturdy-looking armor with thick chest plate, and his clothes leave the outline on his muscular arms. (T.L Tights clothing?) There was a rumor that someone tried to punch him in the jaw but broke their hand in the process.

His gaze is as sharp a a hawks. To my surprise, the children take his gaze like it's nothing and the atmosphere is neither that of weariness or fear but instead, it's full of confidence. Even if this is just a training exercise, Commander Balin is fully dressed in armor, with his thick body armor, a shin guard, and gauntlet on each hand, it's like we are heading to war. On his waist are several spare daggers. And in his hand is a dangerous looking polearm.

Iron armor is difficult to handle but they is relatively cheap, due to the country's military having a good trading partner. It is not the same story for regular people, however. For them, iron is an expensive and valuable resource. Every soldier is given iron equipment at the bare minimum. When Balin became a commander, he asked to be stationed in Bern since it is his home. With the presence of a person who made it to the high command chain of the Kingdom, it sure boosts the villages morale greatly. Quite a few people gave up on farming and enlisted into the military to station in the village as well, but very few ever make it out of this outer region. For Commander Balin, fighting to protect his homeland from the hands of Demons is his dream, and he is a determined fellow. By the way, Miu-san's husband is Commander Balin. There are many soldiers here who stare at their interaction with jealousy. Their daughter is not here of course, but their son is here, being trained to protect the village. In comparison, Miu's chest is much larger than Dina's. It wasn't a joke when I said that Dina and Risha were among the top beauties in the village, but Miu's chest simply dominates the competition. If Balin wasn't a commander, he would've already been killed multiple times over by the sheer envy emitting from the men.

Now, the one who is in the middle of this group, the priestess, Ramese Retisha, is a woman in her twenties. She has a calm atmosphere around her and can silence all of this commotion easily if she so choose. She is very open hearted, and good natured, so she gets along with everybody very well. Originally, there wasn't a priest of Mairahl in Bern, but for some reason, the Kingdom decided to send a priestess here. Either way, Retisha was sent here

about two years ago and is now working in the small church dedicated to Mairahl. On the subject, since Bern is a small village in the middle of nowhere, Retisha's ranking is lower compared to others priests and priestesses in the middle of the kingdom, but with her dedication, she helps improve the life of the villagers spiritually. (T.L. Not to be confuse with "Spiritual Energy.")

Priests and priestesses are not required to go into combat, but if they happen to be in Bern, observing the flow of the battle may be more beneficial than praying. And so the monks and Retisha are dressed up and ready to participate in the exercise. Retisha cut her hair until it reached her shoulder length, and tied it into a bundle. Even when in "battle," she still has her gentle atmosphere.

Retisha is wearing leather armor to keep warm. On her waist is a belt and in one hand, she holds a shield. In addition to that, she has a necklace around her neck, a symbol of which only a priest is allowed to wear, and supposedly, it gives its wearer Mairahl's blessing. If you thinking that Retisha can't put up a fight, you are in for a surprise. She has been living here for two years already, so fighting against Demons is something she got used to.

As of right now, everyone think the miracle called magic is something that was given to those who have a strong faith in the Gods, and it is something extremely advanced. In reality, magic in this world is still very weak and undeveloped, so even if someone can use magic, they will not be able to put Healing magic into practical use. However, magic such as detoxification, strength and durability buffing techniques are still a very effective way to fight against Demons. Magic is an incredibly valuable asset for Humans in battle.

"As usual, today we will deal with the Kanusagi and Giant Rats to get you all familiarized with fighting against Demons. However, while doing so, I want each and every one of you to pay attention to their movements and try to synergize your attacks with your partners in order to kill it."

Commander Balin announced their goal and roughly six or so answered "Yes" loudly. Soon after, the training start. During training, these children have more fun playing with their weapons, or making some fancy moves, rather than practicing and having actual combat. After a day of fun, they would go back home as if nothing happened. As for me, I am glad there are combat exercises, because I can test my limits as a Human, and also, I have this tendency to outdo others, showing off, and tend to not cheat using magic.

The place where the training exercises take place is an open plain where I would go and collect medical herbs. We follow the instructions and the children divide into groups of three and march into the field searching for Kanusagi and Giant Rats. If us subgroup leaders were to see any sign of trouble that might be too much for the children, we would step in and take over. Because I ate a bigger lunch than usual today, thanks to Airi, and the fact that it still early spring and even if it still afternoon, the weather being a bit chilly, I feel rather good. Full of strength, I feel like I can do anything. My group and I watch out carefully for the children, especially Albert, because he is very focused on his duty.

Albert is one of my childhood friends who has pale blue eyes and freckles on his face. He is as tall as I am. When he was small, he was very goofy and cunning, almost like a devil brat. For example, when he used to be able to jump into the river and take a bath, he would sneakily approach a girl bathing and touch their boobs and butts. That made girls look at him

with hateful eyes everytime they see him. As the result of his stupidity, he was banned from ever bathing in the river again. Even if you say that it is an innocent act, if repeated multiple time, it would turn out to be a bad reputation. As with the case with Albert. If possible, I would like to say that Albert's personality is fearless.

Albert is wearing his favorite green bandana to hold up his hair, a vest made from three pieces of snake skin sewed together, and is holding a spear to sweep the grass aside while walking.

Albert's spear tip was taken from the blade of a broken dagger and tied to the tip of a wooden pole. If I remember correctly, he got that from his father's campaign with the Kobolds and Goblins, while defending against a Demon attack. While walking, he looks at me and asks.

"You're a little behind today. Is there something wrong?"

While it is the subgroup leader's job to look out for the children, at the same time, they are also hunting animals for dinner. Yes, while walking through the plain, using my enhanced senses, I've already caught myself some rabbits. While seeing that I have lagged behind, Albert asked.

"Nothing, I was just thinking if there is a way I can cultivate Steelgrass and find a use for it."

"You've got to be kidding. It's call Steelgrass for a reason, it's as hard as iron and if there were some use to them, someone would've already found it!"

Like the name suggested, Steelgrass have leaves as tough as iron, and it doesn't exist anywhere else but in this open plain near Bern. Each leaf is shaped like an oval, the longer the leaf, the older and tougher it is. Of course Steelgrass is a kind of magical plant, but other than that, nothing else is special about it.

Just imagine it, a material that is as tough as iron but much, much lighter. The possibility for its use is vast, however, there is no efficient way to harness its power. The Old Witch uses a magic formula to turns Steelgrass into a fine powder and applies it onto the Elixir and the Elixir's bottle itself, which gives the Elixir iron attribute and makes the bottle super hard, like iron. After the powder is applied and settles outside the bottle, it gives off a shiny black luster and you can easily use a piece of soft cloth to clean it. There are quite a few adventurers trading for those "Iron-plated" Elixirs, because they are not easily broken and they contain the Iron-Elixir inside very well. In the garden of the Witch, there are small number of Steelgrass, which when harvested, the most Airi can make is enough powder for around ten bottles. Many magical scholars have tried numerous methods in order to harness the power of Steelgrass, but due to the difficulty in handling the magical plants, and the risk at mis-handling it, the success rate is very low. In the future, if none succeed, I want to give it a try so Steelgrass will become a type of raw mineral easy to be produce. That would make the life of the people on the edge of the continent much easier.

Harnessing the property of Steelgrass for common benefit is one thing. What's more important right now is to get Selia to be accepted by the villagers. There's no easy way to disguise her as a Human because unless the Human race are all fools, which most of them are not, they will certainly recognize Selia as a Lamia.

All the talk about Steelgrass is but an excuse for being late, and since it's a complicated subject, Albert won't pursue the reason I was late any longer. While thinking for a way still, I silently looking around for signs of animals and Albert is also keeping a low profile, otherwise the game will be alerted and run away.

My brother is just silently watching the children while everyone else fails at finding prey. It's not like he doesn't want to hunt, but because he is wielding a big machete, it is difficult to land a killing blow on his prey in this Steelgrass plain. Though that machete is effective against Demons and wild animals, that's for sure. Albert and I stop hunting and go back to our duty, which is to look over the children, due to the weird noise coming from ahead.

What it is, is a big bird that runs instead of flies. It has yellow feathers and beak. Its beak is the size of my arm. The taste of its meat is plain, but it's easy to eat, and since it's huge, there is plenty of extra meat. I then lower my spear into the earth, and slowly approach the animal, while brushing through the Steelgrass leaves. The bird hears my footsteps coming from behind and instead of running away, it stands its ground and strikes back using its thick beak. Before it can strike me, I use all my arm strength and pierce the bird right through the middle of its chest.

I feel its life force quickly disappears with fresh blood flowing out of the hole on its chest. Before it dies completely, it lets out a small voice as if spatting a few curses. While I am feeling a sense of achievement without much trouble and relieved that there will be plenty of food for later, Albert's voice calls out to me. I wonder if I should pull the spear out or leave it in the bird's body still, but hearing Albert hurrying me, I decide to leave it there. Even though Albert is calling out impatiently, there is no feeling of fear or danger in his voice. I rush over and find that Albert along with the children are standing around a spot on the plain.

Did they hunt a small prey? I don't see it's body.

Albert lifts his head when he see me come over and I see that his hand is on his spear while it is impaling something.

"Albert, Collca, I'm coming!"

Collca is the name of a boy who is nine years old.

"Take a look Dran. They are Giant Rats, and there are four of them!"

"Dran-senpai, I killed one of them but the rest got away."

"Well done Collca. I've also hunted a big bird."

After telling them what I did. I confirm the location of the three other Giant Rats that Albert informed me about. Since they still belong to the rat family, the Giant Rats do not stay in one place forever. So we divide up and hunt for them. Collca and Albert chase after the Giant Rat that is closest to them while I hunt for the other two. I cut off the path of one Giant Rat and have my dagger ready to strike, but it desperately jumps around and makes it harder to hit it accurately.

Giant Rats sure are a handful.

Its big, strong legs are specialized in digging and running through tunnels, but not so much for running on the surface. (T.L. Huge legs, in tunnel, kick back => forward. surface, kick => ^ move up.) It has gray fur that is very warm and its meat is not bad either. Although there are only two Giant Rats that I am chasing, it seems like there are four or five of them. Being in the grassland does not help, it blocks a huge portion of my vision and the Giant Rats use this to their advantage, kind of, but this isn't a problem for me with my enhanced senses. When I notice the movement of the Giant Rat slow slightly, I put most of my strength into my legs and jump up into the air, draw the dagger that I made and aim straight for the Giant Rat's neck on the ground.

After I confirm that the Giant Rat is dead, I look back at Collca and Albert and see Albert smiling with satisfaction with his spear piercing his prey. Albert then pulls his spear out and just to make sure, stabs the Giant Rat one more time in its neck.

It doesn't seem like he will need my help.

I then proceed to pick up a couple stones on the ground and throw them in four different directions to make the last Giant Rat show itself. Understanding what I am doing, Albert pulls out his spear and readies to pursue the Giant Rat when it is spotted. Fortunately, the Giant Rat is close to where Albert is so when it shows itself, he swiftly thrusts his spear right into the animal's throat. Afterward, Albert, Collca, and I all let out a small smile with our success.

"Is that the last of them?"

Albert holds up the skewered animal and hangs it on his spear and walk over with Collca with a smile still on his face. I pretend to not see him skewer the Giant Rat and shrug it off.

We round up all of our kills, that including the big bird I killed earlier, and these four Giant Rats.

What I get to bring home are the two rabbits I caught beforehand and the big bird which I killed, the rest are group effort so they can be shared amongst the others. When everybody gathers up, all exchanging their achievements and after seeing all of this, Commander Balin lets out a laugh full of joy.

Luckily, no one was injured today, and after seeing Retisha's relief, all the boys seem to be very pleased. Commander Balin carefully examines the big bird that I killed and asks me how I killed it, which I answer him casually. By the way, everyone who participated in this training exercise killed at least one prey, so everything is going well. My brother Dylan also scores big today judging from the fact that he is carrying three huge snakes on his back, and the two children whom he watched over helped catch a deer by feeding them wild mushrooms that they brought. It is a deer with black fur, young and healthy looking. That is definitely a big catch and it will benefit our family greatly.

The plan which I thought of for Selia to gain the villagers' acceptance through honor seems to be useless because of today's success. I continued to think of a way before and during the training exercise and even now, but all of my ideas just won't do the trick. When I was still a Dragon, all of these complicated thought about Human connections and acceptance made utterly no sense to me. Only now as a Human being do I realize there is so much more to

Human relationships than meets the eye. It would be great if someone could tell me what to do at times like these. Then maybe later, I can be wise and tell others what to do.

After that day, I continue to visit Selia everyday, and while I do so, some strange things happen in Bern. Every day, while patrolling at dawn, the two gatekeepers would always find a dead animal on the road to the village. One time it was a crocodile with large teeth, and has a huge clue pearl in its mouth. The animal is supposed to live further upstream, and was somehow dragged all the way down to our village and from examination, it seem like it was just killed the night before. Sometimes, instead of a big animal, around ten to twenty Giant Rats and Kanusagi and other wildlife washed downstream. What's more, there are traces of a huge snake crawling around the site as well, and so rumors and opinions start to flow around between the adults in the village.

Needless to say, it was my doing in order to help Selia understand Human behavior beforehand. I, who thought of this scheme, should be ranked among the top most incredibly talented schemers ever in existence. At first, what I did was I made the people guess what was going on, then gradually made them aware of the existence of Selia, who is a Lamia, being active around the area. And so, to do that, I kill the animals, and make it look unusual like with the crocodile with large fangs and the blue pearl in its mouth among other things to stir up suspicions.

Before suspicions began, all the kills and efforts I put into hunting to make this happen were all sold and it profits the village in some ways. All the bones, meat, leather, and jewelries are processed and made into tools, and whatever is left-over or not needed are shipped to Galois and traded for supplies.

It is not until the Old Witch and Commander Balin finally decide that this is the work of a Demon, that all the attention begins to focus on the matter. Commander Balin, who knows all the Demon species that live around here, combined with the Old Witch who knows a lot of magic, easily pinpoint that the tracks are that of a Lamia. So they held a meeting at the village chief's house and the content is told to be about how children are not to be left unattended outside of the village, and all of the dangers that a Lamia is capable of. While they are having the meeting, I use my super hearing to peep into their conversation.

"With the chance of a Lamia being around the village is high, you all should be aware of its abilities. First off, it can easily kill you with it's powerful tail. Then there is their Demon Eyes ability which will paralyze you, even if I can recover from it relatively quick, there will be no time for me to react if it sees me as a priority target. Even Retisha's blessed necklace won't be able to save her. Not only because of the two reason above, it far surpasses Humans in terms of magical power. The subjugation of a Lamia is always very difficult, and will most definitely have casualties. To minimize collateral damage as much as possible, the soldiers stationed here will require the cooperation of everyone in the village. Once a Human sees a Lamia on rampage, they will surely piss themself and run away with tears in their eyes. I won't blame anyone who does. "

Because I know Selia's personality fairly well, I don't feel like I will need to do that. My father is tolerant towards other races, but if you hurt those whom he loves, it's a completely different story. The conversation continues to reach my ear from afar as I work on my field.

"A Lamia, huh? Why is such a thing here, of all places?"

The unexpected question brought forth by the Old Witch, while she puts on a smile, surprises me.

“There were a few stories about Lamia, not as many as you would have thought, but they are out there. Lamia is a race that have a very, very, very beautiful Human upper body appearance and their lower body is that of a serpent. There are no male Lamia so their race would go out and find a Human male to marry. I wonder if the ancestor of the Lamia race, the Cursed Princess of the Kingdom, felt lonely and found a man of her own? And if that tradition still exists, maybe this Lamia may also be searching for her future husband and has had no intention of harming us.”

Oh? I mutter unconsciously. I did not think that there were people who know the story of how a Lamia chooses their husband. What more? What the Old Witch said would actually help Selia. It’s good that there are people who understand the circumstances of others and are always willing to look at it from another angle.

“Just as the Old Witch said, although there is always a chance that the Lamia around here is planning to invade our village and eat us. If we do not defeat it if that is the case, there will be collateral damage.”

“We won’t know what the Lamia wants until we meet it. Until that happens, keep in mind that the Lamia is a threat and be on high alert and on the look out. It would be better to split up Dia-san, Risha-chan, and Airi-chan because they know about Lamia better than the rest of us, besides the Old Witch.”

“Not only that, we should also ask for help from the Kobold and Goblin tribe as well. The help from the Witch’s family just won’t cut it against such a threat.”

After hearing the Old Witch’s points and story, Commander Balin and the village chief are debating on the best course of action.

“Let’s say for example, this Lamia wants to live in the village with us, will we be benefit from that?”

“If we talk about their magical power, one Lamia possesses magic way above that of an average wizard. They have beautiful looks and can charm any male, with the strong poison they carry in their fangs and courses through their veins, they can easily render any adult useless, a flick with their tails is enough to break a man’s neck. Really, even if she wants to live inside the village, the fear of Lamia would still be there. We did make alles out of the Kobold and Goblin tribe so I don’t see why we can’t ally with Lamia. By the way, if you heat up their snake skins, you will have gold, so it’s definitely good.”

Fumu. What she said were genuinely the same benefits of Selia living with us that I had thought myself. The Old Witch has a significant influence over the village so if it goes well, everything will work out after all. I have a smile on my face before I even realize it, Albert looks at me with full of suspicion. *Is there anything else I can do to speed this up or is there?*

When it’s night time, I carefully sneak out of the village to go meet up with Selia. The patrols around the village have already been increased. While I am on look out, the patrols come close to our rendezvous point several times. The figure of Selia dragging the killed animals

can be seen even in the dark. But the skill of the soldiers with bow and arrows are bad, so Selia is able to get away safely.

The “presents” from Selia to the village continue to be “delivered” even when Selia was spotted which draws even more attention from Commander Balin. With all the big kills Selia has brought to the village, which will be used to make a feast, slowly but surely, the urge for negotiation will be invoked via the stomach. Everytime we meet up, I encourage Selia to not complain on why it is taking so long and that she must do all of this in order to be able to live in the village with me, and so, Selia presses on.

When the atmosphere in the village gradually changes from suspension into a calmer atmosphere, I finally decide to push on the matter of direct contact with Selia a few days later. The opportunity is on the day where training will take place. The number of lookout for Lamia have decreased, and it has became the concern of the top officials of the village.

The training itself was to be postponed until the matter concerning Lamia is dealt with, but since Selia’s actions were low-risk to them, it has began again. However, because it is still a concern, three children are assigned to three subgroup leaders.

I choose the day when I am to participate in the training exercise and have Selia stay hidden in the corner of the grassy plain. It is presumed that the Lamia only shows up at night so it will be a perfect situation for both sides to meet. Of course everyone knows about the Lamia being around, so whispers about the matter can be heard among the children. Even some excitements can be heard from them as well, excitement about how a Lamia may live in the village. I’ve already discussed with Selia beforehand on how to negotiate the matter with Commander Balin and so right now, she is hiding in the plain waiting for the opportunity to show herself.

I have my usual outfit, a long sword on my belt, leather boots, and light armor, and lead the children to near where Selia is hiding, which should have been here, but I also pick up the presence of an unknown being. I figure that it is a Demon, which is not supposed to be here, but is definitely there.

The fellow has a huge body, he stands roughly twice my height. He has black fur, short and thick looking limbs which are brown. The fellow stands up and pokes his head above the grass and looks straight at me. With a clear look at it, it is one of the Armored Bears that live deep inside the forest near Bern. Its armor is probably as hard as iron, and that body far surpasses any normal bear. It can easily slap a man’s head off with a single swing, or maybe even knock a fully grown tree down with ease. This is a beast that can easily kill ten to twenty Goblins with moderate difficulty. If a Human encounters this beast, avoid it like a plague. More importantly, why is such a creature who lives deep in the forest here?

If I use my Dragon power here, I can deal with this like blowing out a candle, but then I hear Commander Balin’s voice calling, telling me to run for it. It’s is a proper reaction for an average Human before this Armored Bear. Can Commander Balin handle this Armored Bear alone? Should I unleash my power and deal with this so no one will get hurt?

I make up my mind and pull out my long sword from its sheath, and position myself in front of the Armored Bear. The moment the bear is ready to charge at me with full force, a dazzling light block my view.

A bolt of pure magical energy heads straight for the Armored Bear. Even so, it's quite a basic attack, with Light Magic Attribute. The bolt of pure energy lands on the bear's right flank, sparkling with a green light. After the light disappeared, there is a hole in the bear's armor and some flesh was brunt. I follow the firing trajectory back to it's origin and I see a familiar figure.

I see Selia appear from the grassy plain, and I walk toward her. The Lamia girl, one who is labeled as a Demon due to her ancestor being the Cursed Princess of the Kingdom, is mysteriously beautiful.

The Armored Bear takes that last attack and avoids fatal injury thanks to its armor and its thick layers of fat. When it recovers, the Armored Bear lets out a loud roar full of fury. I snap my attention back onto the bear immediately when it does. Regardless, Selia and I both are unfazed by its roar, Selia herself is already preparing to cast a new spell.

I am hiding behind Selia and touching her snake bottom, supplying her with energy of course. As such, Commander Balin does not see me. The amount of magical energy I am giving Selia is like a drop of water in the sea. For Selia however, it is a massive amount of power, also, it is the very maximum limit for her.

Selia is trying very hard to concentrate while absorbing my vast amounts of spiritual energy, but I can tell that her face is all flustered. While the Armored Bear is charging toward us, Selia's preparation is completed as well. Selia then points her index and middle finger* at the direction of the raging bear. (T.L. Sword fingers?) The sight of a beautiful person, fulls of pride and spirit, would make anyone forget the fact that she is a Demon.

「Oh God of the Earth! Grant me power and form my lance so I may pierce my enemy!」

As she finished her chant, a triangular magic formation starts to spin and Earth Magic Attribute starts pouring in, forming the shape of a lance pointed directly at the charging bear. Selia's Earth Lance, which is made from my magical power, is extremely powerful. Once it flies toward its target, only death awaits the bear, and so after the spear shredded through the Armored Bear, all that remained is the huge body of a bear with a hole in it.

Usually, putting that much energy into that Magic spell would have made anyone feel intense physical and mental fatigue. But in this case, Selia is still the same, no visible sign of fatigue.There shouldn't be, after all, I was the one who provided her with energy. That spell just now was still on the lower end of Earth magic, but she can use stronger spells depending on her growth.

「Oh the God who governs over water! Grant me power and form the blade that will slay my foe.」

Selia rises her left hand toward the sky and then after her chant, a blade of water refracting sunlight comes down and decapitates the bear. Poor creature, but it has to be done to just to be sure, bears are resilient creatures, after all.

"Are you injured Dran-san? I'm sorry, I should have noticed that that bear was there earlier."

I answer her with a low voice so the Commander and the rest won't hear us.

“I am fine. It’s not your fault that you didn’t notice sooner. It’s good that you were able to help out.”

As a decent person, it is only right to help those who are in need if possible, so I don’t think she should feel bad at all. The Armored Bear was not in the plan, but the acting is about to start. The soldiers from have Bern already surrounded Selia, pointing their spears at her, ready to strike if she turns out to be a threat.

“Back away from Dran, Lamia.”

Commander Balin who has crushed the skull of numerous Demons, speaks in a commanding voice toward Selia. Behind the Commander, Retisha is already drawing her bow at Selia. Selia looks at Retisha and she starts to get a little nervous. Before Selia can say anything however, I step in front of her to cover for her.

“Commander Balin, she was the one who helped me, us. She means no harm.”

Commander Balin glances back at Retisha, gesturing for her to check if I am under the effect of Demon eyes. It would definitely be weird that I am covering for Selia so just to be sure, Retisha uses her necklace, which can check if one is under the influence of magic, and finds out that I am clean. They then ask about what exactly has happened, to which I reply that Selia has helped me to protect the children. I feel bad having for lying to them, so I quietly apologize to them in my mind.

“It might seem like that was the case, but be careful Dran. This is a strong Lamia, don’t trust her completely.”

“I am someone who helped you, there is no need to be alarmed. If I wanted to kill you, I would have done so already.”

It’s something I would have said if I were still a Dragon encountering Humans. So I told Selia to memorise it and use it for this instant. My soul is still that of a Dragon, and I still retain most of my power, so there isn’t anything I needed to fear. After being raised by my parents, I felt some sympathy toward Selia when we first met, and she has gradually become an important friend of mine.

After considering the situation, Commander Balin walks toward me and puts his hands on my shoulder, Selia closes her eye behind me. Demon’s eyes are fearful things, after all. He speaks with calm voice.

“Since you’ve said it. Thank you for helping us, lady.”

Since I am concealing our relationship before this meeting in front of everybody, I feel bad for having to do so, but the result will have a positive impact, hopefully its pays off.

“However…”

“Ah, that’s good.”

Selia replied, and Retisha walks forward from behind Commander Balin toward me. After a few moments she seems to be satisfied that I was not harmed in the slightest. Selia instinctively moves away from me and closes her eyes, since I told her to do so beforehand, so that others can approach her. The reason being her Demon Eyes ability. It's just something to show that I am not under her control.

"Recently, there are cases of prey being delivered to our village, are you the one behind it, Lamia?"

"Yes, there is no doubt that I am the one who did that. I've been…. Ouch!…"

….Selia bit her tongue out of pure nervousness. Her eyes are already teary.

Go for it, Selia. I give her as much cheering in my heart as I possibly could.

For a brief moment, the tension seems to fall apart, but Commander Balin forces a cough and gets back on topic.

"Right!…Why did you do such a thing? Why did you help Dran?"

"Well, that is because I want to live in your village. I've lived with my parents ever since I was little, but now, I am following our tradition and am on a journey. However, travelling alone makes me feel very lonely. I figured that it would be better to live where there are Humans for a while.

As to why I helped this person, it is because it would be bad if the village I am seeking refuge in lost one of its members. Also, my dad is a Human, so I feel it is only right to save other Humans."

I told her in the first place that she should try something other than what her mother taught her, take some chances and walk her own path. By the way, she spoke all of that without biting her tongue. What she said was all true though. If she hadn't stepped up and attacked the bear, either the bear would have attacked me or someone else. Selia still has her eyes closed and is holding her hands together in front of her chest, pleading to Commander Balin and the others while looking very desperate. All the soldiers surrounding us had an expression that seems to adore her, some even blushed, the children are behaving childishly too.

Is this the power of the Demon Lamia? Is being whispered around.

While the children talk to each other.

"It's surprisingly not scary at all!"

"I wonder if the fortunetelling of Airi's Oba-sama was correct?"

"It's not a bad Demon?"

Thus it breaks all the tension. *Children are amazing.*

Commander Balin also eases back a bit after remembering what the Old Witch has said. The thought of Selia harming Humans seems to have mostly vanished from everyone's mind. Suddenly, Retisha, who is protecting the children behind, shakes and falls to her knees while crosses her fingers and prays to the Goddess Mairahl.

I notice a warm atmosphere around Retisha…she is a priestess after all. Commander Balin keeps his eyes on Selia and calls out to Retisha, due to her sudden behavior.

"Retisha, is something wrong?"

"Balin-san, I have just received an oracle from the Goddess Mairahl!"

"What!? Really?"

Judging from the Commander's reaction, it seems like receiving an oracle from the Gods are still very uncommon.

For Retisha, it may also be the first time she has experienced it, so she looks all excited and such. After all, it's a message from her Goddess, Mairahl. I feel like Mairahl is smiling mischievously. I wonder where she is right now? I let out a small laugh nevertheless.

With what the Old Witch said in the meeting, combined with this presumably good omen from Mairahl, things will be settled smoothly. To the average Human, a Lamia seeking refuge in their village with the help of the Goddess Mairahl is an unbelievable thing. Retisha has been living here and became accustomed to our way of living so she can accept it, however, the higher ups from the church would not have easily approved of this.

For a while, Retisha continued to look excited and dances happily. When she finally gets over it, everyone's composure is restored. This becomes a big topic so Retisha and Balin go back to the village to discuss it with the chief and the Old Witch. The discussion happens over several days, and everyday, Selia continues to deliver prey without fail. Also, it changed from being delivered at night to delivering it in broad daylight. Selia also waves to the people who see her, and they smile back, everyone exchanges a friendly smile to one another.

Five days after the encounter, the discussion comes to a stop and the decision was made. They have determined that Selia is not a dangerous Demon, and she will be allowed to live in the village, however, she will be monitored, and she will not take the life force of the Humans either.

On the day the village officials meet with Selia at the North Gate, everyone gathers in excitement but some will undoubtedly be wary. Commander Balin, my father, and I walk to her, delivering words while welcoming her with a bright smile.

"Welcome! Welcome to the village of Bern."

"My name is Dran. I am very thankful to you for protecting me last time."

Selia and I "meet" under the bright blue sky.

[To be continued]

==========

Author’s Words

-Former Dragon:

“Ah! I am bored, is there anything fun? What else is fun in life?”

-Current Human:

“Yahoo! Human’s life is super fun! Family love, brotherly love, love! I love everything!”

You can reply to these comments later. Thank you for reading!

==========

[Chapter 5]

-The Earth Goddess and The Female Swordsman-

Right now, I am in a world that can be described as an Utopia, or rather Heaven. It is a place where Life and Death, Good and Evil, intertwined in absolute chaos yet so beautiful. It is also where Gods and Goddesses isolate themselves from the mortal world.

Also, my Human body is currently sleeping soundly in the bed within my house, which I built from the earth, grass and trees in Bern. My consciousness, my soul slipped out of my body and took on my Ancient Divine Dragon form. So here I am, in the Realm of the Gods.

For the last sixteen years of my life as a Human, my soul has been resided in the shell of a Human body. However, I am not currently physically or spiritually bound to my body, so I feel rather good. While I am in this realm, the chain of that pulls everything to the ground, also known as gravity, does not apply to me. Therefore, I fly high into the blue sky with my three pairs of wings spread wide. When I see my destination, I let out my favorite phrase. *Fumu.*

I stop flying and descend onto the ground. The spot I'm currently standing on is in a small region of a large continent in the sky. The beautiful blue sky stretches as far as your eyes can see. Near here, there are waterfalls spilling mist into the air and forming clouds. It's such a beautiful sight. The one Goddess I was expecting is waiting for me, and she smiles while seeing me come into view. For some reason, I find myself quickly feeling joy, and the smile on the beauty's face is warm; how I'd always known her to be.

The Goddess is dressed in a piece of white silk cloth hanging loosely by two strings, her jet-black hair is straight and long, almost reaching all the way to the ground. Her black pupils glow radiantly like black agates. There is no mistake, she is the Goddess with the most influence, Mairahl.

I land on the ground and flap my wings a few times while balancing my big body on my feet. Of course, my form right now has no weight so it was only done out of habit. After all, my Dragon body is one which I had grown accustomed to for eons. I take a look around and see that the fully bloomed flowers, green trees, and green grass are living healthily in this environment. Those flowers can only exist on this Haven, where the Gods live and are only permitted for their enjoyment. Thus, they give off a very sweet scent in the warm wind.

Even Mairahl, a Goddess whose very existence on Earth is being revered, grew tired of the world because people catching diseases, and the population grows old and declines. However, she stays the same and keeps showing her gentle appearance.

"It has been long time. Old friend, Dragon."

Mairahl's voice sounds both like an old woman and a young girl, it's still the same as the last time we met, what a nostalgic feeling. The reason why I feel nostalgia now probably has something to do with meeting her again.

"Certainly. How many ages has it been since we last met, Goddess of the Earth? Either way, I am happy that you still look young and healthy."

Mairahl smiles. *I wonder if I said something funny?*

“Fumu. After all, my soul has been damaged due to my reincarnation into a Human. I hope it is not too shabby in front of the Lady?”

My figure as a Dragon right now has six wings shining on my back, my eyes glow with seven colors(rainbow color), and my scales are white. In my opinion, nothing has changed regarding my appearance, but it may not seem so to Mairahl. If by accident, I expose this pathetic figure to an old friend, I am very sorry, but Mairahl laughs like a little girl and shakes her head, and I realize my misunderstanding.

“No, that is not the case. Compared to when I saw you last, you look much livelier, and I am glad that you are so. Oh…When I heard that you were taken prisoner by men, and since you grew tired of living and such….I too… thought…”

“I won’t deny it. At that particular time, I had already grown tired of living, whether I continued to live or die did not matter to me at the slightest. So when the Hero’s sword pierced my heart, I felt neither a will to live nor to struggle, I only thought that it was finally over. I took it for granted. Also, I didn’t think that I should cause the Heroes anymore hassle than they’ve already had in coming to kill me.”

It’s like I’ve used their attack as an excuse to commit suicide now that I think about it. Even in my final moments, I spat a few words at the Heroes. in retrospect, it was a little childish, the Heroes shouldn’t have had anything to worry about.

“I see. However, the current you seems to enjoy living very much.

I am very happy to see you standing here, the figure of you and your soul doesn’t hide anything and I can see that you are living and enjoying your life as a Human. I am glad that it turned out this way.”

“Hearing that from the Lady herself, I am proud to have you as a friend, Mairahl. Fumu. I did not think that reincarnation into a Human was possible. However, the feeling of Human flesh, the stimulation of how they feel and taste things from a different perspective blew away my boredom and filled my soul with joys. So I thought about it and decided that this is a much more enjoyable way to live.”

After I was born as a Human being, through a Human baby’s eyes, I was surprised to see so many differences compared to the perspective of a Dragon. The unfamiliar Humans live their lives with their fragile bodies and low magic output, the joy and excitement of when my younger brother was born. Although life out on the edge of the continent is harsh, I talked to Mairahl without getting tired.

It is great that Mairahl, who is one of the major Goddesses, and also considered to be the holiest Goddess for Humans, to be listening to my story like a mother listening to her son’s bragging. She did ask quite a few questions but I answered them all. It seems that I have become talkative lately. The Earth Goddess was a very good listener. Then, I finally notice that I did not talk about what I came here for. I make a gesture and bow to Mairahl.

“My story took longer than expected. The reason I bear the shame of exposing this slightly shabby appearance to the Lady is because I wished to talk about the matter concerning Selia. Thanks to you telling the oracle, she was able to live in the village.”

“That’s good. Recently, the people living in the village pray to me, and a sign of something very nostalgic was felt. So I started looking for what is going on in the Human world and stumbled upon you and that Lamia girl talking to the villagers. I listened to the story and gave an oracle out of kindness.”

In addition to that, it’s all thanks to Retisha who has both faith, strong enough to receive the oracle, and a kind heart, which allowed the situation to work out well. Once again, I lower my head toward Mairahl. And besides, using an oracle is considered to be a very big deal, so the fact that Mairahl used it to help Selia live in the village extinguished any doubts of her being dangerous to the villagers for good. For doing such a thing, I can only feel like I have to offer enough gratitude.

“Nevertheless, I feel that I have not done enough to show you my dearest thanks. Lady Mairahl, what do you suggest I should do in order to repay you? I can do anything that will benefit you with the best of my current ability. Or if in the future you happen to be battling a strong foes such as an Evil Demon, I will rally into battle to help you as well. My power up to that extent still remains.”

The so called Evil Demons, they are an evil existence, evil Gods, the false Gods that dwell in their own evil spirit world. Within it, numerous factions of Demons exist, and even if I were to destroy a dozen legions, there would still be millions, or billions. But perhaps their numbers are infinite, and they would continue to try and corrupt the world.

Strictly speaking, that world would be called Hell, and inside that hell, there can be another smaller Hell within it, and inside that “mini” Hell, there maybe a ruler which is the leader of all the minions in that pocket world. (T.L. It’s like a universe of Hell. A Hell within a Hell within a Hell. Hellception.)

Anyway, if one of those Rulers would attack the Gods and try to disturb the balance of the world, then I will destroy him and his legion and make it a favor for Mairahl. After all, if they were to win, which is unlikely, it would cause very serious negative effects on the world. If someone else(Gods) asked me to fight those Demons, I would refuse them and let them deal with it.

After hearing my resolve, Mairahl puts on a troubled expression. I struggled to find a way to repay my debt, and resolved to offer my power as a Dragon to do so. It would seem that in my desperation to find a way to repay the favor, I’ve pushed my benefactor into the corner of not knowing how to respond. The sense of guilt immediately attacks me and gives me an urge to apologize. I will reflect on this later so next time it won’t be this way.

“Please pay it no need. It is not not big of a deal. If possible I would be satisfied if we continue to be good friends.”

“Is that so? I am happy for you to say that. If all the other Gods were like you, how prosperous would the world below be?”

“Each of us Gods operate differently, we do things to our liking. After all, we are not perfect beings. Thus, the world below is the result of our actions. Do you dislike the imperfect world right now?”

“Friend, you have taken it in the wrong direction. I welcome all the experiences a Human can experience, the world as it is has already given me plenty of joy.”

I reply with a small laugh, and Mairahl in turn let out a small smile across her face. However, I’m having a little trouble discerning if that smile is an ancient one or a sly one. Now that I think about it, Mairahl has the tolerance and affection/love like that of a mother, but at the same time, she possess the personality of a childish girl, her duality still hasn’t changed since the old days. Of course this “love” is directed only to her friends in term of liking, and not mutual love.

Although it is fun talking to Mairahl after a long time, if I stay in this realm of Gods for an extended period of time, my Human body would subsequently be destroyed. It’s best if I end this conversation soon. The small village on the outskirt of the kingdom is the place I want to stay in, to live and enjoy life. Simply put, I love the village.

“I’ve finished my unexpectedly long story. It was fun talking to a good listener like yourself, Lady. Since I was reincarnated as a Human, it would be troublesome if others find out that I go in and out of this realm as I please. That kind of trouble is unnecessary. So I will be taking my leave before it does so.”

“Ah, yes. Since the War God Arden loves to have contests of strength against you, once he senses your presence, he would no doubt step out of his hot bath with weapons in hands, and come rushing over. Despite the fact that you’ve weakened compare to your former self, your soul still shines brightly. The other Gods will take notice of that soon.”

“All the more reason for me to excuse myself from here. I need to get up early and tend to my potato field tomorrow.”

“Are they sweet potatoes?”

Mairahl puts her hand on her cheek and tilts her head to one side while asking me.

Me and the potatoes. It is a mysterious relationship that I should think nothing of, because there are none.

I answer the adorable looking Mairahl with a serious tone.

“They’re potatoes.”

“You have….sweet potatoes.”

I nod at her statement and staring at her in her black pupils. Soon, Mairahl covers her mouth with both hands and giggles vigorously.

I wonder if I said something funny? The process of producing potatoes is fun, I think.

I take a couple steps back and casually rise my wings, as I do so, the grass, the flowers, the leaves, and small trees branches wave gently due to the pressure from my wings. The higher I go, the smaller Mairahl look, and she waves at me. Then, a young looking Goddess with blue braided hair shows up next to Mairahl, seemingly intending to protect her. Looking at the Goddess who just showed up, her appearance may be that of a young girl but she has a more older feel to her, she probably one of the lesser Gods.

Did she notice my presence and rush over to Mairahl's side thinking that she was in danger?

Mairahl is such a tomboy. If Retisha were to know this, I wonder what her reaction might be? That's something I want to see.

That said, it won't be good if I stay around here any longer. Thus, I down thrust my wings downward and jet upwards, flying my soul away from the location. The place where Mairahl waited for me look like the size of a puppy in an instant, behind me.

That Goddess however, was probably turned into a God by Human belief. In a Human's life time, they spend quite a lot of time devoting themselves to the Gods, and it is not limited only to Mairahl. Depending on whatever fame, desire, and belief one possesses, and the influence they have with the people around them, after they die, those beliefs may transform into a kin of the God.

I am one of the oldest beings/consciousnesses in existence, those who rule Heaven and Hell had saw me were in awe, tried to search for my origins and tried to understand my true nature. And because of my power, my name and my appearance are well known by all the Gods, both Good and Evil.

At the same time while I am thinking of these matters, back at where Mairahl is standing, the other Goddess who is wearing Godly(?) clothes that only Gods can wear, confirms the safety of Mairahl and then kneels before Mairahl, apologizing for not being there sooner. I lower my speed, and land on the ground, then direct my attention toward the conversation between the rookie Goddess and Mairahl out of curiosity.

"Mairahl-sama's safety is of uttermost importance. I who was given the honor to serve by your side has allowed you to be exposed to danger. It is a disgrace. Please do as you will and punish me however you wish."

Most of the major Gods usually keep a high ranking God by their side, but Mairahl of all people likes to keep the rookie Gods with her, being an oddball. All the while saying that she likes to take care of them. The rookie Goddess's face turns pale when Mairahl takes her hand and raises her to her feet, she then strokes the rookie's cheek.

"It was I who left your side out of my own convenience. It is not your fault Meifa. Now, stand up."

While Meifa's face was still looking down, Mairahl's hand continues to rub her cheek. After a while, Meifa collects herself together in a hurry and parts from Mairahl hand. Meifa probably spent her entire lifetime, gathering trust and feeling of respect from many people, but in front of Mairahl, she is but a child. Maybe a God's nature may has something to do with their birth as a God originated from men.

“I’m sorry, Meifa. That Dragon is a very old friend of mine. Due to the circumstances, it was not possible for you two to meet. There is nothing to be wary of. Come here, and take a look.”

Mairahl shows Meifa the scene of the best and most beautiful flowers in the world being display in Heaven being blow lightly by the wind. It is a spectacle so beautiful that only exists here, and there isn’t a way for Selia or my family nor any mortal to see it.

“The flowers, the grass, the trees none has been tread over, they have not been squashed, you see? He is a person with so much thoughtfulness. You do not need to panic in case he shows up again.”

I feel a little embarrassed and continue to return to my Human body back in Bern. After I finished thanking Mairahl, I return to my sleeping body around morning.

When the sun rises high enough to chase away the darkness, I take fresh water from the jar and wash my face to freshen up. Then I prepare for breakfast, as usual. I warm up the remainder of my dinner from yesterday, but farmers are normally satisfied with black breads and potatoes for breakfast, and head out to work. I also add the smoked meat of the Mutant Rabbit that I killed before, mixing it with vegetables and eating it with the omelette made from the eggs of the Dodo bird I have behind my house.

Dodo birds are domestic animals with discolored feathers, a cockscomb on the head, and with their deteriorated wings, they cannot fly. I have a habit of nudging the little ones, children require special attention, however I hold myself back if it were a Human child. I own twenty Dodo birds at my house, the treasures they lay are full of nutrients. I don’t usually eat their meat, I only do so when they die of natural causes, for example, in an accident or of old age. They provide me precious eggs so I rarely strangle them. I spice up the taste of the Rabbit meat with herbs and it was great.

Now I start taking care of the potato field I mentioned to Mairahl, and the potatoes will be the main dish for my dinner, but how is Selia doing, you may ask? Selia continues to be monitored by three soldiers whenever she goes somewhere, after all, the villagers still do not trust her completely yet. The fact is that the fieldwork is the responsibility of the father, and he needs to produce enough food for the family. Whereas the house chores were taught by her mother, Selia once told me. Selia can handle most things even if she were to live alone. Selia goes outside the village to hunt for animals, fish, etc., since she knows that the villagers do not completely trust her.

As for me, I brought up the fact that Selia saved me from the Armored Bear and asked the Chief for permission to take care of her, and he reluctantly gave me his approval. However, the wariness towards Lamia is still lurking around. I even sense it from my brothers and parents.

Personally, I think if Selia continues to try hard at getting their approval, the minimum amount of time it’d take should be around five days. It’s long enough for them to take notice of her personality. This process should not be rushed because like in the past, all Selia needs is time. The more times she spends living in the village, the more comfortable the villagers will be around her. So naturally, I do not worry about it very much.

Although Selia was given a hut as a house, that particular hut was in the possession of a family which left the village to travel south because of their son's marriage, so it was left unattended. [Editors note: it's implied that they went to live with their son, now that he's independent.]

"It is alright to stay at my house for a while."

I suggested but I was unfortunately turned down . The reason being that there is still distrust and rumors about living with Demon that would start, leading to an unfortunate outcome..

The hut has been abandoned for five years now, and thanks to the sturdy building method, the rain and wind did not damage it very much. Although some window have broken and house is very drafty. There was a rat nest inside the hut but when Selia appeared, they mysteriously disappeared. It is understandable since Selia has the characteristic of the snakes, and snakes are one of rat's natural enemy, but still, the rodents ran away with lightning speed.

Yesterday Selia was guided to the hut, and started to live there that afternoon, the village Chief, the Witch, Balin, and Restisha. announced that there they will be responsible for monitoring her, along with five other soldiers, my father, Goran, also chose to participate. It is a fairly large group, but it was established in case Selia decide to show hostility. Also, since only Retisha received the oracle from Mairahl, there are suspicions about whether Retisha is acquainted Selia, but commander Balin supports that they aren't related, since he was present during the encounter.

Though my father has a very friendly relationship with Goblins and Kobolds, he could not help but be wary of me being friendly with a Lamia, he worries for his family much more than others. Despite the fact that I befriended a Demon, a potentially very dangerous Demon, he respects and trusts my decision. Furthermore he is brave enough to volunteer to monitor her, I am proud of my father.

It's unfortunate that the only things left inside the hut is an empty shelf and an old stack of firewood, but Selia doesn't seem to be concerned about her living space at the very least. She has been provided with some cushions and a new set of sheets to put on top of the straw bed in the back room of the hut, as a place to sleep. Since Selia's lower body is that of a snake, the Old Witch suggested that it is better to use those as padding rather than to sleep like a human. In fact, the Old Witch herself provided Selia with the cushions, as well as a new sheet from her own house. The old witch definitely wants to welcome Selia as a member of the village. It probably has something to do with good omen she sensed, after all.

In addition to the cushions, Selia was also given a whole new set of tableware, and also smoked meat from the game she hunted. She didn't need a new set of pots since she brought her own, and she sets them near the stack of wood. For Selia, who has been camping out in the abandoned Kobold village up until recently, she wouldn't complain about living in a hut at all.

She hugged the cushion and deeply inhaled the scent of clean fabric, laying down on her bed and rolling around it while she giggles.

Fumu. She is a cute one.

Such an innocent action matched the appearance of the girl before them, the village's Chief, the people, and even commander Balin's guard, stared at one another dumbfounded and the tension was eased. (T.L. Lamia used "Cute" It's super effective!)

Her behavior was not fake, and these people knew it, therefore it would be very unreasonable to think of that person as a terrifying Demon. Granted, Lamia may indeed be dangerous, but it is not the case with Selia. I think that getting to knows one another is better than holding imaginary fear and casting hatred on another race. In this case, the Lamia race.

After she was done enjoying the cushion and finished unpacking her belongings, she bowed deeply to the village elder, thanking them with a bright smile on her face. That, combined with her wavy blond hair, made her resemble a sunflower. Afterwards, they left her to her own devices for the rest of the day.

Looking at that smile, who on this Earth would have thought of Selia as a dangerous Demon? Selia's smile was filled with gratitude from the bottom of her adorable and innocent heart.

Selia's first day in Bern was being guided around the village and being shown to her residence The next day, Selia went hunting with the other hunters in the village. Selia is still a young and immature Lamia, but even so, she will be able to defend the hunters from other monsters near the village. I feel relieved when I think that the group of hunters will be safe near her.

I eat my lunch which consists of black bread, smoked Mutant Rabbit meat mixed with vegetables, a fried fish which I caught in the river, and a jar full of Miu's milk. I eat a lot but I also work hard, and at the same time, I'm having fun everyday.

At the end of the day, my sweat soaks my shirt and drenches my cheek and forehead. The fatigue makes my body feel heavy and my arms and fingers hard to move, with the sun setting over the horizon, the wind blows past me and gives me the joy of being alive.

With the sky all red because of the setting sun, everyone out in the fields starts to collect their belongings, packing up to go home. I retrieve the net I left in the river that morning, and has caught some fish in it, sling it over my back and go home. I've only recently fixed my long standing habit of collecting too much food., I was able to catch just the right amount. My habit of using magic while doing thing still remains from my past life, but I limited it as much as possible. But every now and then, I over do it, and it's not very good.

One must learn from their mistakes and correct themselves one step at a time.

I decided to challenge everything a Human is capable of, and I am not afraid of failure. Fail the challenge, try it again, fail it, and try again. Eventually, it will lead to success if one has the patience and corrects themselves in the process. This method matches with my personality quite well. I spend a lot of time learning and perfecting the fish trap that my father and brother taught me, and my current one isn't half bad. When I am busy thinking about my trap, I walk past a certain house and a girl hides behind the door, speaking out to me with a quiet voice.

"Ah, Dran-san. Can you come in for just a minute? I just want you to have a taste(?)."

The owner of the voice is Miru, the fourteen year old daughter of Miu and commander Balin.

Miu's blood runs deep in Miru's veins, and as such, she has many features of the Cowpeople, including fur, hooves, a tail extending from her buttocks and past her knees. Her ear pokes out of her brown hair and her fur has the black and white pattern. Her well developed breasts is being pushed up by the white dress she's wearing. Her narrow waist is around the same as her mother's even at her age. The atmosphere around her is also as gentle as her mother, Mui.

To be frank, sometimes I wonder if Airi is really only a few years younger than Miru, while Miru is younger than Airi mentally?

In this spingly night, Miru looks at me with an innocent and completely defenseless smile, and I walk over to her.

I walk past the open door where Miru is standing, right before I enter the house Miru steps aside and her breasts bounce as she moves. Once inside, I follow Miru obediently. Commander Balin lost his parent in an epidemic and a Demon attack. He met Miu while being trained as a soldier in Galois, and once they married, they've lived here ever since.

I was lead to the dining table with six chairs around the long table by Miru. Also, Miu is present in the room as well. No matter how many times I see Miu and Miru together, I cannot help but think that they are sisters. The men in the village cannot help themselves but to be jealous at Commander Balin.

"Hello Miu-san. I hope I am not bothering you."

"Oh no Dran-san. It's not your fault. After all, there is something that I want you to taste for me. Please help yourself, and sit down at the table."

I take Mui-san's offer and sat down into one of the chairs. I have a feeling that I'll be tasting something delicious, so I'm secretly wondering what it is.

"Eh? Is this perhaps…?"

Miru places three cups of white liquid in front of me with a smile on her face. A slightly sweet aroma is coming off of the liquid.

"This is milk, but perhaps it's Miru's?"

"Yes, Today, I began to make milk~~. I let Oto-san and Tauro taste it, but I also want someone outside of the family to taste it as well, so will you drink it, please?"

Tauro is Miru's younger brother. He inherited the traits of the Cowman, and Commander Balin himself taught him martial arts.. It was said that in the future, Tauro is planning on becoming either an adventurer or a soldier.

"Fumu. It would be my pleasure."

Since producing milk is a sign that proves that a Cow-woman's body has become fully mature, I am not particularly ashamed of it. Rather, I feel like it's something to boast about.

Since the relationship between Cowpeople and Humans are deep, their milk also provides Humans with a valuable resource. Helping Miru by tasting her milk is nothing too moderate. With the milk placed in front of me, I am just thinking if Miru squeezed it out herself or if Miu did it since Miru may be still inexperienced?

"Since I did not have much training in squeezing it out yet, mother had to help me with it. It was squeezed out this morning did the taste worsen since them? Dran-san, Please taste it?"

"There is no reason to decline your request. I'll taste it."

There isn't a reason for me not to taste it. Miru comes over to my left side and sit down, leaning her face towards me and staring intently, asking me to taste it. After I answered, she had a smile plastered across her face. From where she sits and leans towards me, her voluptuous breasts are directly below so I avert my gaze .

Just what is the secret to breasts that attract the eyes?

It's even bigger than Selia's, does every Cow-woman have big breasts?

I bring the cup of milk to my mouth and take a sip of it. I make sure I do not swallow it immediately and taste it thoroughly, enjoying the taste itself.

"Delicious. It's even sweeter than Miu's. With this, the villagers will be delighted."

Miru looked at me with her eyes sparkling while waiting for me impression. I gave her my honest impression, and since my vocabulary is lacking, I tell her what I really think, no exaggerations, none. Afterwards, I set the empty cup down and finish drinking the others. Miru looks at me with a smile on her face, but gradually it is turning into an embarrassed smile. One way or another, I spoke what was truly on my mind, and I am glad that she likes it. Miu who heard my reply is relieved and takes the cups away.

Although we live in the same village, squeezing milk isn't exactly something you would show to a guest. And NO, I am not disappointed in the least.(Editor: you sure about that?) Miru smiles happily and suddenly hugs my head against her breasts, which feel wonderful, and most adult women can't even compare to.

Fumu. It has a rich feel that is soft, yet completely elastic. They're the breasts that make milk, and I would never be tired of touching.

It would be good if I worship the Cow-women and show them my appreciation from now on.

"Oh Goodness. If Dran-san says so then I think that the villagers will definitely be delighted. I was a bit worried. Thank you so much Dran-san~~."

"Mugyumugyu."

Miru increase her strength in hugging me to her chest innocently. I am not complaining since it is soft, smells great, and is comfortable anyways. However, it is an act that I will not carry over to the wrong direction. While I am considering what I should do, Miru finally releases my head. Well…I feel both disappointed and relieved. Does the disappointment surpass the relief?

"I'm sorry. I was hugging you without thinking about my manners. I had been told by Oto-san to fix it but I am just very glad."

Miru's habit of hugging others involuntarily is something she had even when she was little. In fact, she has already hugged most of the children around her age, her friends.. She held back in the recent years, but it doesn't seem to have disappeared completely.

"You should not be so defenseless in front of a man, Miru. After seing you do so, others might take advantage of you.. Because Miru is cute and pretty, guys might lose it and attack you."

"Eh, eh? Cute? Me?"

"Well."

Oh? Miru's face completely blushed. She's probably not accustomed to this kind of speech. A child simply follows what their parents taught them, but what they need is practice(? experience), and in time they will find a suitable partner. Or not, but I am doing well so far.

Miru's understanding of it is limited, but fortunately for her, her physical charm won't be of a disadvantage against anyone. Her personality on the other hand, will be somewhat of a problem. Miu brings me another cup of milk(warm) and I decide to stay at her house a little longer to chat. I received the jar of milk from Miu and while she is handing it to me, the motion of the milk inside reminded me of the motion of breasts.

"It is quite a lot."

"I was finally able to get it all out. Since both Miru and I are able to produce milk, even if we manage to get everybody to drink as much as they like, there will still be extra. So it will be shipped to other villages and traded. Therefore, Miru and I will have to do a better job."

"Hehe, please drink a lot~, Dran-san." (T.L. Emphasis)

"Oh thank you. I appreciate it."

I say my goodbyes to Miu and Miru, and head to the river to carefully place my trap in a good place.

I already took two small Sharlotes out of the previous trap and I feel good knowing that the trap did its job, while walking back home. With the fish and the jar of Miru's milk, tonight dinner will be very delicious.

It seems that my expectations of Selia getting along well with the village betrayed me, but in a good way. I had considerably underestimated the sociability of Selia, and the the villagers' adaptability.

When it is time for lunch, I take a break and sit on the tree stump near my bean field, watching Selia and the children swimming in the river. Yes, the soldiers are still doing their job monitoring her, but the tension from the first day has decreased considerably, at least for the time being. However, they still carry their weapons, ready to charge at her if something were to happen. As expected of the soldiers who fight on the frontline.

It has been three days since she started living here. The children are already calling her "Selia-nee." Right now, I can see Selia playing with the children, and to them, she is probably the perfect older sister figure. She is being splashed with water diagonally by some kids, while others are even clinging onto her tail. I can hear cheerful laughter from everyone of them, including Selia.

I had asked Selia what she thinks about the children but she replied that she is the only child in her family therefore, she said it would be fun, and that playing with children might be like playing with younger brothers and sisters. Since I do not have much free time to spend with Selia and can only interact with her at night, it is nice knowing that she still has fun with children. (Editor Note: hooooh, do clarify on these "interactions" dran, do tell.)

Also, the village's hunting efficiency has risen considerably, all thanks to Selia's Magic and Demon Eyes. What's more, Selia only eats a small portion of meat and vegetables, and so the rest of her game was given to the village, and she gains a lot of good reputation with the hunters. Also, there are no parents stopping their children from playing with Selia anymore. It is nice having Selia on a good terms with the people here.

But right now, there is something else that bother me. It is the Armored Bear incident. Why is it that a Demon that lives deep inside the eastern forest, which is rarely seen around here, appearing? Fortunately, there hasn't been a sighting of a second one but it might be necessary to check things out.

Fumu… Should I ask for permission to do an investigation in the forest?

On a certain day, I have to participate in a combat training session for the children with Commander Balin. The place this happens is in a courtyard of a certain two-story inn, with the soldiers station outside. Compared to the two fully equipped soldiers next to us, Albert and I only have a wooden spear and practice sword, respectively. Airi-chan and the other children looked at us with the eyes that seem to be comparing who is better.

Adjutant Marida is under Commander Balin and is his Second in Command. She has clear and unyielding brown eyes. Her hair was cut to an even line in the front, and overall, she has a very sharp look. Her skill with the sword is no less than beautiful, the way she wields it is very fluent. Her enemies would be fools if they think that such elegant movement is not deadly.

Her skin is tan, and she is wearing a partial chest plated armor over a thin layer of leather clothes. In her hands she wields a single-edged sword. The blade is slightly curved, and the

tips is very sharp. (T.L. A japanese sword, but this is not Japan so I can't say it's a Japanese sword ~.~) (E.N: You sure it's a nihontou?)(T.L. Yes.)

Marida is tall for a woman, however, she is inferior to a man in terms of muscular endurance and overall fitness, even in training. Therefore, she specializes in quick, precise, agile, and deadly attacks. Watching Marida wielding the sword while moving on the ground, and cutting the wind. Is like watching a dancer move along with the music, it is as if she had become one with the battlefield, you can say that it is her natural talent.

There is no doubt that if she were to move to the more central area of the kingdom, she would be granted the title of "Sword Master." Living in the village with that level of swordsmanship is truly a shame. Ironically, her sparring partner holds off against her quite well, and it partially due to Marida's lesser experience with combat. Marida's opponent is another experienced soldier.

Also present is someone who has stayed in the inn for the past few days. She is an adventurer and was staying in the inn to collect information, since she saw that big crocodile, and she wanted to know what's going on before heading into the forest.

Now that I think about it, all the efforts put into making the scene of that crocodile was all wasted.

The female swordsman also has a mysterious habit of going to the church and pray to Mairahl along with Retisha for an entire day. The village of Bern doesn't usually get visitors, so the female swordsman does certainly pique my interest. As a matter of fact, people naturally get attracted to her because of her noble atmosphere. She wears very expensive looking clothes, the way she interact with people and her manners are both very noble, like an aristocrat. Slowly but surely, the people here have already come around to admiring her.

Her outer appearance is good. There are no traces of useless fat visible. Her chest is slightly small and is being pushed up by her clothing. Her waist looks healthy and on top of that, she has a well rounded buttlock. (T.L. Oh boy…) (E.N: Down bingu, down boy. -masa) She wears a pair of tight leather pants that beautifully shows the outlines of her legs, all the way to her ankles. Since she doesn't have a lot of fat, her legs are presumably very muscular, yet still retain the features of a woman. (T.L. Oh boy #2….) (E.N: Sit, bingu!) Her silver hair is tied up with a blue ribbon, reaching down to the middle of her back and glitters in the sun like silver, it is magnificent. Around her neck is a gold necklace which suits her quite well, silver and gold.

Her long eyelashes protect her blood-colored irises from the elements. (T.L. "Her long eyelashes protect the vividly red irises of this young girl from the elements." Editors….help….) (Editor: Pupils are the black centers, irises are the parts than can be colored. if you have colored pupils, you're a freak.) (T.L. I think I am just gonna call them eyes from now on. Unless it specifically say pupils, or irises.) Her lips are small and wet, the same color as her pupils.

A few days ago this female swordsman, whose beauty could bring a country to ruin, visited the Chief's house and declared her name to be Christina. The Chief granted her permission to stay at the inn for several days.

She is wearing a silk shirt and tight leather pants. Christina is attracting lots of attention, especially from the men. She is currently practicing by herself, if she were facing an opponent, all of her attacks and blocks would have worked perfectly. Combine that with the fact that she is wearing tight leather pants, Christina is attracting lots of attentions from the men.

Once finished, she glances at those of us that are training and the other soldiers teaching the children martial arts in the center of the yard. She looks at us with her curious red eyes that show signs of her wanting to participate, despite the fact that she is an outsider. While Albert, with a wooden spear, and I wielding a sword, are practicing our stabs and slashes on a target dummy in the open, Christina comes over and asks.

“If I may trouble you, would it be alright if you allow me to participate in training? The Kobolds and Goblins will give me a rather dull experience if I train with them.”

In front of Christina, Marida sheaths her curves sword in its scabbard, and directs a group of children over to Kress, one of the supervisors.

“I do not mind, however you are an expert Swordsman and it will be a rather painful time for the kids if you were to spar with them. Therefore, I will be your opponent. Would that be alright with you?”

Marida replied with a dangerous tone against the girl, but Christina, still cladding a noble atmosphere wasn’t fazed in the slightest, letting out a small smile. On the side, Kress, Albert, Airi, and I can’t help but let out a smile at the two attractive females, Marida and Christina, all are excited for the duel.

“Since it was I who asked, I have no reason to refuse. I would thank you instead, but I think it is best to only use one hand against you.”

“With a strangely perfect balance that can move in all directions, your center of gravity is no less from perfect. It is very exceptional, there aren’t many people like you, even in Galois, no?”

“I thank you for the compliment. Regardless, it has been a while since I practiced with one arm, this will be entertaining.”

We; the people in the back, cannot help ourselves but to be curious about Christina’s sword arm. Marida, who happens to be today’s training supervisor, can’t help but let out a bitter smile.

Then Christina draws her sword from her leather belt, decorated with Magic Stones, and dashes straight for Marida with her sword in hand. Their swords clash a few more times. It doesn’t take long for us and Marida to realize that Christina’s swordsmanship is on another level.

If Marida is first-class, then Christina is at the absolute highest peak. . Christina’s swordsmanship makes me doubt my eyes and question if a Human with such skill could possibly exist. Kress, who is the other supervisor for today’s practice, is watching the their sparring with admiration, and so are the rest of us.

The breakdown of the duel is like this.

Marida counters the attack by directing Christina's sword to the left. After she hit it, she turned her entire body to the right while swinging her curves sword at Christina like a Crescent Moon. Christina dodges the swing by lowering her body, however I can see that she isn't too familiar with using only her right hand. She regains her posture immediately. The gap between the two seems large, but for those two, the distance means nothing because the speed at which they move is like lightning. If we blink for even a moment, something would already have happened, the anticipation is very high. Marida advances toward Christina at frightening speed, but instead of panicking, Christina just lets out a small smile.

"Judging from my stance, I don't suppose I should be the one engaging first. Come."

As Christina said that with a light tone, she then starts to move under today's fair sky. Her first few steps left footprints in the ground. I wonder how much strength she possessed in her legs in order to do such things. And how is it that she is able to utilize that strength and turn it into speed? (T.L. Lots of power, but little traction, that is what he means.)

What's more, Marida, Kress, and even my Human eyes (without using enhance vision) cannot see Christina clearly, all we can see is her afterimage, and it looks like a wave of silvery looking wind. (T.L. Genjutsu! wait…Taijutsu?)(Editor: clever placement of holograms.)

Suddenly, right in front of Marida's face sparks fly. (T.L. Damn Ninja.)(editor: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6MX5uyXrb4)

Christina has changed her "wind's" direction and went straight for Marida. However, Marida must have blocked that one attack by pure instinct. Despite being in broad daylight, the sparks from their swords are bright from when they hit against each other. In the heat of battle, Marida shows an astonished face, and a moment of hesitation is shown.

Marida is a soldier on the frontline, she is more or less experienced in battle, so she quickly suppresses her astonishment and regains her focus. With the two swords still in contact, Marida tries to press it against Christina's right flank because she notices that Christina's defences were lacking in that area. Christina stands her ground, however.

Ever since I was born as a Human, I have not once witnessed any Human that possessed her level of physical strength and speed. In these two criteria, she has already far surpassed the realm of Human's capability. Granted, the number of Humans I've seen up to now is unlikely to have surpassed one hundred. (T.L. Sad story T_T)

Seeing that neither is backing down, both of them change the direction of the force on their swords and slash at each other, but to no avail because they both evade it smoothly, almost. The force Christina puts in her sword was a little too much for Marida, so it slightly glances across the back of her neck. (T.L. Ninja, I am telling you.)(Editor: what is it with you and ninjas? Too much naruto >..>'!|) (T.L. Naruto ending soon :/ gotta add as much Ninjas as possible.)

Marida lets off a sharp hiss. Even though it is a mock battle, if the sword were to find its target, the one receiving it would undoubtedly be cut or even killed. (T.L. People die when

they are killed!)(Editor: People bleed when they are bleeding! <or when they take an overdose of warfarin(a blood thinner)>)

Perhaps in a mock battle they should hold back more, and speaking of which, is it a good idea to do a mock battle with real swords?

Does Marida herself want to see if she can cope with Christina? (Editor: FYI only an idiot<or a rich dude> blocks an enemy directly with the edge of their sword. Think about it, two sharp pieces of metal chopping each other, they both get chipped.) (T.L. We don't question how they fight because the weapon hitting each other look cool. It's all about the cool factor hooray~~)

Marida pulls back her sword that failed to hit Christina and she ducks down to avoid Christina's sword as much as possible, and then rolls away, trying to distance herself. Christina sees what Marida is doing and goes right after her while she is still in Marida's blind spot. No amount of luck could save Marida if this is an actual battle because if Christina were to finish her attack, Marida's head would continue to roll down the corner of the yard, but she pulls through by stopping her rolling motion and the two swords once again collide.

"Ohhhhhhhhhh!!"

Marida roars with the intensity of a lion. Intense sparks continue to fly from their blades.

Not just that, Christina repeatedly swings down her sword and we all can hear the sound that is made by the sword swings through the air. I cannot help myself but stare at the swinging motion of the sword, it seems as if that it would continue to swing until nothing is left. However, each strike is beautifully executed and leaves behind a black train of light.

Christina aims her attacks at Marida's neck, but Marida blocks them with her thin sword. Just by hearing the sound of the two swords colliding, it is clear that there is a tremendous amount of force being put in to each swings. Christina's monstrous strength betrays her beautiful and mysterious looks. Through my eyes (enhance vision) Christina is definitely a Human, however there are differences between her and other Humans, especially her red eyes, and her senses.

Fumu, this is rare. Are there people with such physique(referring to her parents), or is she a by-product born inside "that body"? (T.L. By-product is like a mutants child, X-men coming through!) (T.L. Btw, he just scans her with his vision, if you know what I mean :3) (editor: the vision you wish you had.)

Her training with the sword is no short from expert. However, it is lacking compared to the past Heroes and Heroines. In the history of man, there are surely people who were born with a "unique body structure" just like Christina, although it is extremely rare for it to occur. While I am the only one who is convinced that Christina's skill is more frightful than her physical strength, the mock battle heats up even more.

When Marida somehow manages to get back onto her feet, she then pounces at Christina's feet in an irregular position. Human martial arts aren't used against tall people, and it barely

focuses on any point below the knee, so for Marida to aim for the feet, she must absolutely be on the edge.

Even the more savage species such as the Goblin and Kobold, especially the Kobold, aim for the abdomen against opponents who are taller than them. (Editor: … I get the feeling if kobolds learned chinese kung fu they'd have taken over the world. Google up "monkey steals the peach" to see what I mean.) Therefore, even expert warriors have difficulty fighting against Kobolds due to their small size, quick movements, and the fact that they would wear the taller opponent down by focusing the abdomen. Marida may be aiming for the element of surprise against expert swordsman like Christina.

Surprise attacks can be as effective as any regular attack.(editor: if your regular attacks are ineffective, then by that logic, surprise attacks wouldn't work either.)(T.L. Good point, but the element of surprise?) Unfortunately for Marida, Christina simply takes a step back, does a backflip and lands perfectly. (editor: oh….) She directs her cool looking red eyes at Marida.

Next to me, Airi and Albert, along with the rest of the viewers are quite thrilled by their performance . Marida goes on the offensive and focuses on attacking Christina's ankle by staying low to the ground and making horizontal slashes. Each of Marida's slashes with the curved and sharp sword are very fast, it can cleanly cut bones with ease. Even if Christina is wearing a pair of black boots which protect her ankle, that sword can still cut right through them.

Who cares if you are a swordsman or not, when watching these two fight, one cannot help but find it incredible. When the sword is coming for her right ankle, Christina spins her body sideways in mid-air to dodge it beautifully. From what I have seen so far, Christina would not have been able to avoid that slash if she didn't prepare for it before hand. Marida is no less impressive, she too had already thought of her attack plan. As Christina avoids her slash while in mid-air, Marida moves her sword in a continuous flow, bringing it in a stance and cuts straight down.

Marida positions her legs correctly on the ground to put more force into her sword and swings it downward on Christina's left flank diagonally. It is a beautiful slash, the curved arc that she is making is perfectly round and even Marida lets out a little smile of satisfaction.

With the sword coming down diagonally from the top, Christina, who is directly in the way of the cut, does not seems to be surprised in the slightest. Her red eyes follow the sword's edge accurately traveling towards her. Christina uses her sword to push Marida's blade and parries it. Not only that, while the swords are in contact, Christina uses her strength and redirects the strike toward Marida's body.

Noticing that she can't win in the contest of strength, Marida separates her sword to avoid having her own blade used against her. However, Christina doesn't give up and as her leg touch the ground, she pushes forward and before Marida can react, in a blink of an eye, on Marida' neck, the tip of Christina's sword is already touching.

The intense battle ends in that single instant, Christina pushes her blade up slightly and Marida lowers the blade that was aiming for Christina's right leg. I can tell that Marida is breathing heavily and is quite nervous at having the cold blade pressed against her neck. It is

the same for the audience, we are all nervous as to what would happen next, until Christina sheaths her sword and the atmosphere returns to normal.

During that brief moments of tension, nearly everyone forgets how to breathe. But when swords were put down, everyone starts to cheer happily. Only after Kress and I understood that the match between Marida and Christina was finally over, do we relax our guard. While Marida is sheathing her sword, Christina cheerfully exchanges a few lines with Marida. It is good manners to show good sportsmanship.

It has only been a few days since Christina came to the village, she is mysterious, she has crossed swords with Marida, and she seems to be in quite a good mood, however, in her red eyes I could see light, dark light, and something that feels like she has a deep resignation to something.

Now, after having a good match against Marida, she seems to have attain temporary brightness in her eyes. I want to know what emotion or feeling is just under the surface of this beautiful girl.

“Seeing Marida-dono’s skill with the sword and martial arts, isn’t it a shame if you stay in the military?”

“It is not, I take pride in my duty. And I’ve also developed a way of thinking that defending others is the same as defending myself.”

“Is that so? It’s something to be envied. I, on the other hand, lack a reason to continue living simply because I must.”

Hearing a piece of Christina’s dark/negative emotion from afar, I have a very bad feeling about her condition, and I would imagine that it would get worse if she doesn’t have a reason to live.

Fumu. If depression is a topic to talk about, I would talk about it even if it’s a tough thing to. Now I wonder if there will be an opportunity to talk with her?

With the crowd cheering loudly, including Albert and Airi, both Marida and Christina have no choice but to shake each other’s hands with a little embarrassment. Seeing Christina embarrassment, the crowd cheered even louder.

Christina had such charm to her.

After a little bit, with our arms crossed, Albert and I give our impressions, and Miru and Restisha bring over trays laden with several wooden cups and biscuits on them.

“Thank you everyone for doing a good job. Please have some milk, fruit juice, and water.”

“Take care not to drink too much or else you may have a stomach ache.”

Restisha and Miru said while smiling. Perhaps, in terms of smiles, these two rank one and two in the village, which eases almost all of our fatigue from training.(Editor Note: I call bullshit)

“Christina-san, please by all means have what you want. However, I afraid the food in this village might not be to your liking.”

Jars of milk, juice, and water are placed on the table top and from afar, Risha is talking to Christina and complimenting on how beautiful her sword belt is. (T.L. Hardcore Gold digger spotted.)

“Oh no! The food from the village is very delicious. I would love to have some. Thank you.”

Risha pours some juice for Christina as she smile. She isn’t someone who is unable to socialize well with other people, probably because she isn’t wearing her mysterious atmosphere. Now, I’m really interested in what this beauty is hiding in her shadow.

Formally, Christina never once declared that she is an aristocrat, but through her manners and clothing, it can’t be helped that people think that, at the very least she is of noble lineage. Complex relationships between nobles and the ranks are something I can’t imagine. Yes, it is impossible for me to imagine that.

“Miru, can I also have some?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you.”

I hand my cup to Miru while thinking about Christina visiting the village. But at the least, she doesn’t seem to hold any ill intentions.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 6]

-The Forest of Ente-

There are several small forests in the vicinity of Bern, and we enjoy the benefits that they provide us everyday. Of course there are many other creatures living inside the forest, including the kind of savage beasts that attack Humans. So setting foot inside the forest is always dangerous. Children are absolutely not allowed to enter the forest because we are trying hard to keep them out of harm's way. Even adults usually party up with at least three or more people, when entering the forest.

One day I entered the forest to release pigs that were being kept in the village. If the pigs made it past winter we would be spending lots of effort in collecting food; such as acorns from the forest, in order to sustain them. But if we release them into the forest they can scavenge food for themselves and reproduce naturally.

We feed our domestic animals with the lesser quality grain we produce, and nuts from the rich forests. Some of our livestock is fed with high quality grain and nuts from the forest, so that they will have a higher quality meat and we can sell them to the aristocrats who love meat.(E.N: and S&M) The domestic animals fed with high quality food are the ones that were handpicked and bred specifically for that purpose, so their meat is more expensive than normal meat.

Walking in the forest are Selia, Christina, three other villagers, and myself, for a total of six people. Everyone in the group except Selia is armed with a long sword, a short spear, a bow and arrows, to fend off any dangerous creatures that we might encounter. These forests usually have more dangerous beasts than those near the Kingdom's central area.

Judging from our equipment alone, one can easily understand how dangerous it is near Bern. Recently, the savage Goblins that are said to live in the dark wilderness to the northeast, have been spotted nearby, so the villagers are more cautious than usual. Considering that fact that Selia and I are both rare magic users in Bern, and the fact that the top-notch swordsman Christina is accompanying us, there shouldn't be anything to be too stressed about.

At first, I thought that it is alright and I didn't need to be on constant full alert. But after thinking about a certain event, I abandoned the thought. As I watched the pigs eat, I noticed buds blooming with a healthy greenish color, and then I spotted a wild beast approaching one of the pigs.

It is fortunate that I noticed it before it could pounce. I carefully observe the beast as it is gets closer to the pig that is eating. The beast is covered in brown fur with lightning-shaped black stripes on its side. Plus, its fur is quite glossy-looking. If the beast were to stand up on its hind legs, its height would be three times mine. Its four powerful looking legs give it both balance and strength, so it can pounce at any moment. Every claw on its paws are sharp, and look like the teeth of a crocodile. Its rounded ears are down, and golden eyes lock onto its prey with frightening intensity. Its growl is quiet and there are two long and large fangs protruding from beneath its jowls.

It is a rare sight of the rare savage beast, Saber Tooth Tiger, nicknamed Tiger Sword.

It is said that this large savage animal lives deep inside the Ents forest around Bern, where Humans activities do not reach. With its large body, and long teeth, it could easily tear through an Armored Bear's hide. This beast is even more terrifying than the bear.

The fur covering its body is much harder than regular leather armor, plus it has a nice pattern to it. The teeth extending from its upper jaw are no less sturdy and sharp than iron, the length is also about the same as a dagger/around a hand-length-sword, so if a Saber fang Dagger/Sword were to be crafted, it would sell for a considerable price.

While moving behind the little pig to protect it, I draw my sword with my right hand and hold my spear in the other and point them at the Tiger's forehead. Although Selia and Christina both notice the presence of the Tiger, they can't move due to the emergence of another Tiger. They made the right decision to not move carelessly, because the current situation could get ugly quite fast. As I look closely, it seems as though the Tigers were fighting among themselves, because one of the Tiger has fresh wounds on its body, the trail it made is spotted with droplets of blood.

Is it possible that these two were fighting before we showed up?

Tracing back on the trail where the second Tiger came from, I see a dead boar with its neck shredded and its abdomen torn. The marks of the wound most likely belong to the Tiger.

Did they fight so one of them will have the boar all to themselves?

Compared to fighting another one of its kind, the pigs that we brought look much more promising to the Tiger.(editor's note: it's spring. They're bringing the pigs back, not leaving them there.)

I think both Selia and Christina understood the situation, so with only this type of opponent there shouldn't be anything to worry about. The presence of more Tigers or wild beasts cannot be detected so I place my attention on the Tiger in front of me.

It would only take one swipe of its paw, one bite from its fangs, being pounced upon with its sheer weight, etc… for a Tiger to kill a Human. Although the Tiger now focused its attention on me cautiously, there is no sense of fear emitting from it. It's probably due to where the Tiger lives, it had never seen a Human before. Thus, as long as the beast isn't being reckless, I likely won't be in any danger.

I lower my sword and spear slightly. It is a clear provocation,"Are you going to come at me?" Its eyes take interest in my challenge. The Tiger is a predator with as much pride as any Human hunter. It positions its two front legs as to taunt me in return.

The Tiger's two front paws dig into the ground and its leg muscles clearly show how monstrously strong this creature is. The Tiger with the black lighting striped fur launches its very adaptable and tough body at me and attacks. As the beast propels itself forward on all fours, the soil where it stood was blown off by the sheer force applied by its muscles.

As the Tiger is in the air, I adjust my sword and aim for the middle of the Tiger's forehead. My long sword sliced through the warm spring air and created a silver arc. However, my sword did not go where I wanted it to. What happened in that short moment while the Tiger

flew towards me, was that its front paw knocked the middle section of my sword away and made a short high pitch sound “clang!!”

After the sword was hit, I maneuver it so that the blade won’t crack or break, so the strike just now was simply a way for me to toy the Tiger. The Tigers eyes now show signs of anger for failing to break my sword. I outsmarted it. Therefore, the Tiger seems to lose its interest in me and more focus on the sword itself. I figure that since the Tiger’s attention is on the sword, it will then only attack it. It leaps at me again.

I drop my spear, and charge at the beast while lowering my sword to my side, hiding it from the Tiger’s vision. When I get into range, I slide under the Tiger and put the sword in front of me in a defensive position. I pass right under the Tiger and draw out my dagger on my belt with my left hand, and use it to stab the Tiger’s large and unprotected underbody.

The Tiger’s fur is quite hard, so I applied a little of my Dragon’s Magic into the blade, otherwise even the sword would be unable to pierce its skin. The Tiger definitely takes notice that its thick fur and muscles have been penetrated, and its life is being drained away. After having tasted the pain, the Tiger passes over my head and lands behind me.

Coincidentally, the Tiger and I look back at each other at the exact same time.

I observe the wounded creature calmly. The Tiger keeps its body low in a position where it can pounce again at anytime. However, my dagger is still embedded in its chest, and from its mouth, a torrent of blood is flowing out like a waterfall. My dagger is sticking out in the center of its chest, where its fluffy white fur is dyed blood red. The Tiger collapses completely and with its golden eyes, with some life left, is looking at me with the pride that was crushed by me, who is stronger.

I look towards Christina and the others, all are looking at me with a certain amount of respect. Looking at the Tiger where the others are standing, its wounds are much more severe, and from the look of it, it is also around a year or so younger than the one I fought. Either way, it did not stand a chance.

Fortunately, my worries were proven to be entirely false.

Looking as the fact that it was a clean battle, Selia must has used her Demon Eyes paralyzing effect, and Christina dealt the killing blow to the Tiger’s neck with her (Mithril?) long sword. The fresh green buds and moss are covered in the Tiger’s blood, where their corpses laid.

Pun(Hmph), the thick smell of blood spreads through the air.

In the history of Bern, this is the first incident where someone encountered two Tigers and no one sustained injury, much less a casualty, without even losing any of the precious livestock. Overall, it is the best possible outcome for those who happen to engage the Tigers in battle. Only the other three men and I, who have been living in the village, know about this fact because Christina and Selia are new here, after all. We didn’t expect them to know our history that well in the first place. The Tigers are supposed to be living in a forest far to the east. There is definitely something abnormal going on around Bern. If this situation is left alone, then more savage beasts are going to show up for sure.

The corpse of the wild boar is buried so it won't attract any more dangerous beasts near the area. The dead bodies of two Tigers are carried back to Bern.

When we return, Commander Balin decides to talk about what happened, how we encountered the two Tigers in the forest, in the Chief's house. The emergence of the two Tigers in the area around Bern turns the Chief's face pale, and managed to shock the Old Witch as well.

Sitting around the table is everyone who was involved in today's incident, the village's Chief, the Old Witch, and Commander Balin. I slowly raise my hand and request permission to investigate the forest.

"Village Chief, if the current situation is left unchecked, it can get much worse and out of control in the future. What I request of you is to grant me permission to investigate the forest before it gets to that point. Given the fact that there were not one, but two Saber Tooth Tigers that appeared today, it is certainly abnormal. You know this better than anyone, Chief." (T.L. He's (m) Chief.)(Editor's note: A Chief (F) is called a Chieftess)

Hearing my unusually demanding tone, the village Chief lets out a short groan, Hamuu (*nibble*).

The village Chief is already over the age of sixty this year. If he was any average old man, he would have started slacking off a long time ago. However, the duty of the leader of this village rests on his shoulders, he cannot afford to fool around. Despite being old and exposed to the elements on farmland for many years, he still shows little signs of becoming senile.

His achievements and experience was recognized by everyone in the village, and that's also something I yearn for. I hope in ten or twenty years, I will be able to take up the Village Chief's position. (T.L. First thing he's gonna do. Rename the village to "Drangonia." Then conquer the world.)(Masa: dranland, also known as the harem country. Btw, Dran's implying that he hopes the old man dies in the next 10-20 years.)

Being extremely concerned, the Chief brushes his white beard with his right hand.

"If this matter is left unsupervised and grows into an unfavorable situation, as you said it would, then it is in fact a very urgent concern. However, there isn't any reason why I should send you alone. But we shouldn't send too many either. Balin-dono, how many soldiers can you spare?"

"Oh, two or three people could go with Dran. If it gets to that point, we can always request reinforcement from Galois."

Although Commander Balin is being serious about sending two or three soldiers with me, I find it rather bothersome, and it restricts my freedom somewhat.

"I think it is best not to send your soldiers with me Commander Balin, after all, I've a good understanding of the situation to some degree. It might not be good if some unexpected situation were to occur and everyone is split up. Unlike us, you Commander, and your troops are experts in warfare. In the worst case, it is best to have a strong defense force protecting the village." (T.L. Smooth talker ~.~ he just wants to spend time with the girls xD)

Although we villagers do routine training in between farm work, there is no way we are at the level of Commander Balin and his troops, who train regularly and spend excessive amounts of time in studying warfare. They're stationed here for a reason. To defend this village from bandits, barbarians, demons, wild beasts, etc. from harming the people living here. Their equipment is also being provided by the kingdom, and they are very effective in battle. Besides, there is no need to bring anyone into a situation where it might be dangerous and they can get injured.

With my strong counter argument, the Chief once again lets out a short groan, Hamuu (*nibble*).

The decision of investigating the forest is certain, however, it may take a little time to decide who will go.

Yes, it will take time for him to decide after all.(Editor Note: implying that he's taking advantage of an old man)

Just as I thought to myself, regretting the fact that I may not be able to go alone. Selia raises her hand full of enthusiasm.

"Yes! If it is so, I will go with Dran-san to investigate the forest. I have my Demon Eyes and I can also use magic. After all, I did paralyze the Saber Tooth Tiger today. If it's Dran-san and I, we can deal with pretty much any surprise the forest has."

"Ojo-chan wants to investigate with Dran, is that so? Although we had not heard of any rumors of a Lamia tribe living inside the Forest of Ente, if it's Ojo-chan, that certainly reduces our worries. It's a duo of magicians so both of you can manage somehow, but…"

Just how much reassurance does it takes to convince the Chief?

In addition to Selia, there is also another person who both the Chief and I did not consider to be of interest in our village affair.

With that said, Christina who had been silent up until now, stands up from her chair and looks at the Chief with a determined look for she was with us when the Tigers showed up.

"If you don't mind Village Chief, I will also accompany Selia and Dran. My skill with the sword is quite decent, and I have also learned some magic. I hope you will allow me to investigate the forest. How does that sound? "

The Chief who was on the verge of letting Selia and I go, shows a different reaction when Christina asked to investigate the forest with us.

"Absolutely not! If you involve yourself in this matter and end up injured, there is no way we can allow that to happen.(Editor's note: there's no easy way to go about editing this, It's simply japanese grammar clashing with english.) We are grateful for your offer but this is a matter of our village. Please pay it no mind and stay in the village, and never think about going into the Forest of Ente."

After hearing the Chief insisting on keeping her out of the village's matters, Christina keeps her cool look and stays silent. Somehow, it seems that Christina's relative or some high officers she knew had a very deep relationship with Bern. Commander Balin also seems to be agreeing with the Chief, he must know something about her background as well. With Christina's noble appearance, most of the villagers have already predicted that she has some noble lineage in her. It is not exactly surprising in the least. With the strong premonition I've been holding in my chest, I speak out.

"Village Chief, even if you denied Christina's involvement, will you allow Selia and me to go and investigate the forest? If the third or fourth person isn't decided soon, I will proceed ahead and investigate the forest. How about it, Chief?"

"Umu, very well. The task of investigating the forest will be left to you and Ojo-chan. From the bottom of my heart, I value your life as much as I do mine. If you are to go, you'll have to abide one condition: return alive and well."

"I understand. Selia and I will come back without fail, and we won't have a single scratch on us. We will try our best to unravel this mystery."

I replied with a strong and confident voice to reassure the Chief, and he nods his approval. So in the end, Selia and I received approval to investigate the Forest of Ente from the Chief, and under Commander Balin's supervision, we go back to our homes and prepare supplies to head out.

The next day, I inform the Chief that I predict this investigation will take several days. Therefore, I am taking several days worth of food, water, and medical supplies. I am also taking my long sword, and the dagger I used to stab the Saber Tooth Tiger through its heart.

My preparation is almost finished, with me putting on my shin guards, and arm guards made from the skin of a Large Crocodile, and lastly a chest plate. Everything that is needed for minimum protection. I tied my leather flask onto my belt, swung my bag over my shoulder and walk over to the North Gate where Selia and I are to meet up. As for my field and house, I've asked Marco to take care of it while I am away like last time.

It is still quite early in the morning and I can see the silvery moon in one corner of the sky, and in the other I see sunlight dyeing the horizon with a golden color.

Will the day brighten before we reach the forest?

As I walk to the North Gate, I see some familiar faces and greet them. When I arrive at the rendezvous point, I see Selia, with her bulky bags behind her, already waiting for me. As I raise my hand to greet her, I notice Selia's troubled face, so I lower my hand.

The reason is the person standing next to her in the clear chilly morning air, with a very elegant appearance, and the beauty that transcends Heaven and Earth. It is the maiden Christina, wearing black metal shin guards, arm guards, and a chest plate in the same fashion as I.

Christina, whom the Chief objected to entering the forest with us, has her luggage at her feet. There was surprisingly little, and it seems like she is planning to tag along. Seeing Christina's

beautiful figure dressed in black clothing and armor takes my breath away. Seeing my reaction, Selia and Christina both have an awkward smile. The sound of Christina's laughter sounded very fake, almost as if it is cracking. Judging from that, her sociability isn't exactly perfect.

"Good morning, Dran. The weather is very good for traveling. Don't you think so?"

"Good morning. The weather looks very promising. However, haven't the Chief and Commander Balin strictly forbidden you from going into the eastern forest, yesterday?"

"Oh, they certainly have told me not to do so in the hall, but I just happen to be out walking for a few days. I have this occasional urge to travel up the river stream and go to the eastern forest. It's just a coincidence that you two are taking the same route. And besides, I do not know the area around Bern very well so if I go alone, I may end up getting lost in the forest."

She may or may not follow us all the way, but it is quibble, more or less.

It seems like this fellow is very bored living in the village and wants to use this opportunity to relieve her boredom.

Should I say that my analogy is very accurate?

"There is no telling how the Chief may react to your excuse. At the end of the day however, we are all going to be scolded. First off, why do you want to accompany us to investigate the forest? Judging from how the Chief reacted when you proposed the idea, there is something more to you, and I do not want to place you in any danger."

My indication clouds Christina's face, but her beauty doesn't seem to fade at all.

Since I am going on this trip with the condition of coming back alive and well with Selia, if Christina tags along as an individual, as long as she is unharmed, it's all good.

"When I was a child, my relatives told me that our ties with Bern are very deep. However, it is not necessarily the case with me. I have almost no relation with Bern personally. The reason why I am here in Bern is because I was told about this village and decided to travel here some day. While being in the village, I picked up signs of trouble surging. Since the problem isn't something complicated, all I want is to sincerely offer help with my power. Surely dangers are to be taken into account. However, I have confidence in my swordsmanship, and with your navigation skills in the forest, which certainly are better than mine, we can cover our weaknesses and no danger will fall upon us."

Fumu. It seems that despite having a beautiful face, and being the embodiment of beauty itself, she unexpectedly has some rough personal issues, and is willing to voluntarily go head-first into the first sign of trouble, where other beauties like her wouldn't.

Christina, with her beautiful skin shining like new snow, and a determined look emitting from her red eyes, looks straight at me waiting for my answer. As Christina's eyes shine brighter and brighter, it's almost as if the more determined she is, the brighter her eyes glow, so I turn to Selia and ask.

“Selia-san, what do you think about this matter? I’ll go with your decision since I do not mind it at this point.”

I asked Selia for her opinion….She takes a brief moment to think while tapping her index finger lightly on her lips.

With the tip of her tail wriggling, her head tilting to one side, and her relaxed overall look, I feel at peace whenever she’s like this.

“Isn’t traveling together a good thing? We are just going to investigate the forest and get out of there quickly, and since Dran-san, Christina-san, and I are going together, it surely will be fun, and much safer.”

Selia replied with a smile, and seeing her smile, I have a feeling that not going with her decision wouldn’t be very nice on my part. “The decision have been made” as I want to say it out loud.

“I understand. Let it be that Christina just happens to go to the same destination, and she is going to travel with us out of convenience, no complaints? If so, it’s all good.”

“Yes. It’s good to have companion who are as outstanding as you two.”

After we made some changes, the initial party of two, now with three, heads for the Forest of Ente. The road leading from Bern to the edge of the forest is wide enough so that two small wagons can travel side-by-side. However, the condition of the road is quite bad due to long exposure to heavy rain and snow, plus it was elevated above the farmland, and on two sides, weeds grow densely. Some portions of the road gave away so these parts are very narrow and sluggish. (T.L Search “village road” on google to get an idea if you’re a city/shut in boy/girl. No offend.)

The Forest of Ente is a collective of large unexplored forests that covered the entire northeast and eastern regions of the kingdom, extending well beyond the border into neighboring countries. Of all the countless explorers, and explorations that had taken place, the total amount of area they were able to explore and map is around one-fiftieth(1/50) of the forest.

Despite the fact that we enjoy the benefits that the forest gives us, living inside it are savage animals and Demons that could easily kill people. For them, Humans are mere prey. The forest also has some kind of magical effect, probably being produced by magic plants, which easily upsets one’s sense of direction. The climate inside the forest is also very humid and has lots of vapor so food can’t be kept for very long, and if one finds food there, one better know if it is edible. Many lives were lost during the exploration expedition.

Yet, the reason as to why there were so many expeditions is because of the rumors that deep inside the Forest of Ente lay the ruins of the once glorious ancient Elves Kingdom, who in ancient times controlled this entire continent. And its people, the Elves, are asleep within. Adding the fact that every expedition so far had failed, it gave people more reason to believe in the story.

In the past, there were lots of strong and troublesome Demons, and wild animals in the vicinity around Bern. Some examples are man-eating spiders, large lizards that glide through

the air like flying squirrels, etc… Thanks to the efforts to exterminate all Demons, the villagers were able to enjoy life as it is now. However, the act of deforestation to get wood to build a defensive wall and make space for farmland, harmed the forest. But at the same time it gave Bern good protection in case danger strikes, as it had happened many times already.

I was eager to explore the forest ever since the Armored Bear showed up. If I happen to discover the Elves' ruined Kingdom on this trip, all the more exciting.

As we get closer to the Forest of Ente, the smell of wood intensifies, and the earth and water attribute magic grow stronger.

On the ground, there is a stream of a river, a spring coming off of the ground. It would be very difficult for a house to be built here, much less a village, since the ground here simply won't last with ordinary building methods. However, if Selia or her tribe were to live here, they would find it quite comfortable.

Regardless, we arrive at the site where signs of deforestation are obvious and there are some huts nearby. Inside one of the huts on the right is a small kitchen, and on the left is the fireplace and in the middle is a table with six chairs. In addition to that, there is a door in the back which seems to be leading to the bedroom. There is a moderate amount of dust, but it is to be expected since these type of huts were not made for long term living. They were made for workers to cut down trees and abandon them when Demons attack or when their jobs were finished.

We dust off the table, sit down on the available chairs and bring out the food we brought from our bags. It's best to be full of energy before heading into the forest. Christina also eats the preserved food that she brought along without making any complaint. Looking at Christina, who is supposed to be an aristocrat, her actions and reactions to things commoners do does not fit the image I was told. *Did I perhaps misunderstand something?*

I cannot come up with a suitable explanation as to how or why Christina possesses such beauty.

Was it because she received the blessing from the Goddess of Beauty, or was it a coincidence that she was born into an aristocratic family by chance? And what is the hardship she is carrying?

These are things that I want to know.

After we finished our meal, we leave the hut, and walk into the forest.

We soon find ourselves, or rather, our feet being covered by yellow, green, and red glowing grass on the ground, which from afar would looked like they were layers of colorful cat fur. There are places where the roots completely covered the ground with moss growing on top of them, which gave me a hard time walking. But I got used to it with a little practice. Of course walking on top of these areas with leather boots isn't exactly a bright idea, but I can't help but be jealous of Selia who treads over the terrain while leaving behind a much better "footprint" than mine. The footprints I make are deep and the moss which was trampled over is unlikely to have survived.

With the branches of tall and old trees covering most of the sky above, only small rays of sunshine are able to get down to the forest floor through the gaps. Selia and Christina's hair shines under the sunlight like liquid gold and silver, but whether they are real gold or silver doesn't matter, I am fascinated by their beauty. Paying too much attention to them has caused me to lose my footing several times already.

Soon, we are starting to be attacked by Demons and wild animals. As we continue on, the frequency of attack increases.

"Fumu."

I cut the head of the a Todai Lizard clinging on the huge tree and its head falls down on the ground. Turning back, I swing my long sword at another one behind me. (T.L. Todai is the same as large.)

I perform a slash half of my normal speed and cut its neck, and another head rolls. The smell of burnt blood tickles my nose. The heat created by the friction between my blade and the lizard's hard skin is enough to burn the blood on my sword.

These oversize Lizards have tough skins and bones. It's usually take more than one strike to kill them but I've more than enough muscle strength to cut them in one swing. Usually, Todai Lizards attack alone so this was just a coincidence, nevertheless there are no more threats here. I've taken care of the two Todai Lizard that were here. Selia noticed them a bit late and attacked the headless lizard still clinging onto the tree.

With my sword still stained with the blood of the Todai Lizard, I am wondering if I should skin the Lizard. The Todai Lizard's skin is very sturdy, it would no doubt make some nice equipment. However, we are currently inside the forest, and it's not a good idea to increase our luggage anymore.

It's a waste, but can I do nothing but to let nature claim it?

Selia is keeping an eye out above the branches with concentration in case of another attack, but rather looking scary, her eyebrows are drawn up and she look very cute. *Mumumu*.

She holds her fists up at her chest, so it adds more to her cuteness. (T.L. Is this "teary eyes" stare?) Christina and I let out a small smile when we notice a large insect crawling on the forest floor. I have to admit that the creatures that live in the forest had adapted to the environment very well. The insect for example moves against the leaves, grasses, and the branches without even making a sound.

"Selia, there's nothing above. Look under here."

"What? Eh, what is it?"

Reacting to my voice, Selia looked on the ground level and spots the spider closing in on us.

The spider is huge, its height is around the level of my chest. On its legs, hair grew very densely and looked fuzzy. The Spider's colors are purple, red, and yellow, all of which are signs of a poisonous creature. The Spider's eight big red eyes look at us as nothing but prey.

Fumu. With three of us, it would be excellent to have a team battle.

There is also a type of Demon with lower body of a giant spider, and upper body of a woman. They are call Arachne Demon.

They really do live in the forest.

Arachne's threads can be sold at a very high price since the thread can be made into clothing that is very comfortable and durable. That said, the material is in very high demand on the market.

There are rumors about villages of Arachne living in other forests and exchanging domestic products. By all mean I want to visit one of those villages.

Arachne's attack are uncommon but their Demon Spider cousin's attacks are quite common. They shared insane agility, jumping power, and tough strings from its bottom(spinnerets). The reason as to why fighting them is very troublesome is due to those three points mentioned.

For those of us who are in an area dense with trees and slippery ground, it is a huge disadvantage when facing Spiders who live here and possess excellent agility. If Christina, Selia, and I were to be defeated here, we will be killed and eaten. *Quite a thought.*

I grasp the movement of the Spider, jumping from left to right in a zigzag pattern, using my enhanced senses. As the Spider closed in while baring its fangs, I use my sword and repel the bite.

With its first attack failed, the Spider's blood lust increased several fold and it jumps up in the air creating a gust of powerful wind and cuts through the air. I sense magic was used in that jump. While the Spider is out of my sight, I still know its exact position thanks to my enhanced senses.

When it's about to land, I turn and pierce its head with my sword. The blade went through the spider's hard shell and liquid starts to flow out. While in pain, the Spider hammers its legs down on the ground with a lot of force, and I give it another thrust. The Spider drops onto the ground with a loud sound and so much force that it could crush it's smaller cousin spiders to the thickness of a sheet of paper.

I've taken care of the Spider that came at me, looking back at Selia and Christina, each of them is dealing with a Spider of their own.

"Earth Lance! Ei!" (T.L. "Ei" = "Take that!" SFX)

The thin magic spear flies close to the ground shredding the grass and moss, piercing the Spider through its abdomen. The Spider couldn't even let out a scream, and just makes some small noises.

It is necessary to chant when using magic, like when Selia did when fighting the Bear, with enough practice the chants shorten and can become very effective in combat. However,

shortening the chant while delivering that much destructive power would drain the magician greatly. Selia blew the Spider away with a single shot thanks to my supply of Dragon magic.

It isn't something to be surprised about since Selia and I live in a village where attacks from Demons are quite frequent. It's good to let Selia practice fighting so she knows what to do when the village is under attack.

The same time Selia finished off her Spider, Christina is also done with her Spider. She pulls her sword out from the Spiders corpse while the strange liquid oozes out.

Each of us stand close to our respected kills and look at each other, confirming the situation. Seeing that no one was hurt and no more Spiders were around, I feel relieved. Selia asks me to confirm my situation.

"Dran-san, You are not hurt anywhere are you? If only I was able to take a notice of them sooner…"

"There is no need for you to worry. As you can see, I'm fine and well. I'm not hurt anywhere. We are still inside the forest, from now on, things will only get more dangerous."

As we go deeper, we sometimes encounter Large Birds which make a mess by dropping hundreds of feathers onto the forest ground. There are also the wolves living in Ente, attacking us at quick intervals.

Selia aside, Christina and I, who are normal Humans with legs running across the root covered forest floor, are drained of physical strength. It's not like we travel fast, because we aren't, the ground is slick and even "running" is traveling faster than walking.

The attacks keep coming non-stop from all sides, not only Demons and animals, but also strange insects attack us.

The abnormalities of Ente continue to surprise me.

The color of the forest slowly changes from dark green, yellow, and red to more dangerous colors such as blue, purple, black, etc… sometimes, we even step in some nasty liquid on the ground. The bizarre circumstances also apply to the trees and vegetation here. The tree barks have varied colors, and instead of growing straight towards the sky, they twist and turn at random, covering the path. It looks like they are decomposing as well. The ley-lines of this area are severely messed up, all the nutrients that are necessary to sustain life no longer linger here, and thus plants and animals cannot survive in such a habitat.

"This is awful. It is like another world, or perhap a miasma…"

I, using my Dragon soul, and Selia who can naturally feel the ley-lines, expressed our concern so Christina can observe the abnormal situation. If it's a miasma, then it would be as if the boundary between the Spirit world and Material world was broken and is causing all of the things we see here, a much more severe case compared to the Berserk Earth Spirit at the swamp. It is to an extent that it gives goosebumps to whoever is near it.

Selia raises her magic power to cover her body, and Christina draws her sword, ready to strike. The "enemy" Selia and Christina are seeing are one of the spirits that came from the Spirit World and was tainted, thus it look very ugly and unfriendly. Most of the time Humans mistake them for the souls of the dead. Both Selia and Christina are in attack mode and oblivious to that fact.

The stench of thick blood and death fills the air, decomposing materials and dirt covered the spirit, even I won't blame anyone for mistaking it is a spirit of the dead. Then, a big tree gives away, falls onto the spirit, crushing it, and just happens to create a path for us.

Shortly after, we find a corpse of a beast on the ground, blood stains can be found on the trees and grass around it. The corpse looks as if it was killed quite some time ago, maybe four days old. It is an Armored Bear with brownish fur, and its body has been torn with many cuts. The scene looks very gory. This particular Armored Bear is even bigger than the one that showed up near Bern.

Looking at the cuts, what would've possibly happened to this bear? Whatever it is, it's something we must watch out for.

"Uhg", Selia made a small groan after seeing the tragic remains of the Armored Bear.

Christina and I inspect the corpse for further clues as to who or what killed it, while Selia stands to the side and watches.

The thick armor like fur should have protected the Bear from most slashes and pierce attack, but these cut reach deep to the white of it's bone, a splendid cut indeed. Even with the Saber Tooth Tiger's sword, such a cut is not possible.

"Can you replicate such a cut, Christina?"

"No, I can't do it. Plus, there are many cuts, it cannot have possibly done by one individual. They were ruthless as well."

This is certainly an important issue. I also agree with Christina's statement and have an unpleasant feeling about this.

"These cuts are aimed towards avoiding a fatal attack, and prolonging death. They enjoyed watching the animal suffer as it died slowly."

Judging from the wounds, they could easily killed the Armored Bear with just a single strike. Instead, they choose to kill it slowly, aren't they a bunch of savages?

Is the one organizing this kind of killing, messing with the Forest of Ente and driving animals out of it?

As I thought, if this were to be delayed, it would become troublesome for sure.

It might be a little too early to feel relief since the danger is still very much real here.

"At the very least, the soul of this bear will be able to rest in peace in the Sea of Souls."

“You know of such a thing?”

Christina opened her eyes wide and asked me, who was speaking some petty words to the Bear.

It is difficult to understand where exactly Souls goes, for it’s not exactly a place.

“It’s just an analogy. I feel pity toward this bear, and it is only right to honor the dead.”

“An analogy.”

“Well, that’s that. If we left this corpse of the Armored Bear alone, there is a possibility it will turn into an undead.”

“Yes, that possibility exists.”

Naturally, a corpse like this would be picked at by scavengers and slowly turn into soil that enriches the earth, but since this situation is abnormal, someone or something could manipulate the corpse and turn it into an undead.

There’s no better way than to bury it.

I interfere with the soil and in the process of burying the Bear, I pick up an unfamiliar presence and instinctively reach for my sword. Christina noticed the presence at the same time I did, and our Lamia is the last one to take notice. Was Selia disgusted by the corpse and slow to pick up the presence?

“It seems like we will be able to meet the people who were responsible for this soon enough. Christina, Selia, are you both prepared?”

“Was there any preparation to speak of? Their attentions seem to be aiming at us directly.”

“Let’s run away.”

So we begin running away, Christina, with her sword in hand, leads the way through the ground covered with grass, tree roots, and branches. Our pursuers are chasing after us, and we can hear them jumping(moving) from side to side, from the corner of our senses. But even when they are moving relatively fast, they don’t seem to be able to keep up with our pace.

Wait, isn’t Christina suppose to be a normal Human according to my analysis?

I run after the trail that Selia makes with her snake body. Looking back, I see small figures like that of monkeys soaring from trees to trees at their best and chase after several twinkling silhouettes. Their heads and feet resembled that of a lizard, however, the face don’t look like a lizard in the least. Their skin is gray, and their claws are seemingly made of overly grown bones. When I look at them closely, their claws dig into the trees with ease. That’s when I realize how easy it must have been for them to shred the Armored Bear apart.

“Wha… are those?”

I try to remember exactly what those Demons are in order to answer Selia as we run. I have no knowledge of what they are nor was I told about any Demons with that appearance.

However, existed within my memories prior to my reincarnation into a Human, they are creatures I've encountered countless times.

"They are lower class Demonic soldiers. They are called Zeruto. They are small, agile, and possess superb agility. They are very troublesome, especially because they are small and it is hard to hit them. Christina, you better think twice before fighting them head on, one wrong move and you would be sliced into multiple parts."

Demonic soldiers refer to the minions of the Evil God/Demon Lord that live in Hell. They are known for their matchless cruelty, ferocity, brutality, and are extremely aggressive. They hold no love for the beauty of life, living only for destruction. The proof of this can be found on the Armored Bear's corpse.

For them to appear in the material world, some Demon Lords or an Evil God must have come up with a method of sending them here. If there happens to be an army of them in this world, only disaster awaits the humans living on this Earth.

Selia lets out a wry smile with a few drops of sweat on her forehead.

"It's…good to know that."

"They are recorded in one of the Old Witch's book."

It's a lie if you want to call it, there's no other way of settling it quickly. It's easy enough with Selia, she won't ask too much about it if I say I read it somewhere. Then the lower class Demonic Soldiers found us and change their malice directly towards us, and closing in on our position.

"Selia! Use your Demon Eye!"

Selia seeing the Zeruto closing in is trembling, but at my yelling her body shakes, and she replies in panic.

"Yes!"

The Zeruto are fast, small, and have lots of place to hide, so it is a disadvantage for a Lamia to use the Demon Eyes ability. All of the Zeruto immediately hid behind the trees.

As expected, this will be a very difficult fight for me and Christina, even with Selia's support.

After a second or two, the Zeruto continue their advance. Their height is up to my waist. Their bone claws are dyed blood red, even if there are only eight of them here, it is enough to say they are the reincarnation of death inside the forest.

For Zeruto, their favorite place to attack are the legs. These creature would slice off their enemies legs or rid their enemy of mobility, in terms of an army of numbers ranging from

thousand to ten of thousands, they would be on top of you once your movement is cut off. They would then proudly paint the ground with the blood of their enemies.

A Zeruto slice the tree trunk with it's five bone claws, making the tree fall in the process, and look at Christina and I with its slimy face. Christina kicks off the ground with her strengthened body and aims straight for the Zeruto's black eyes. Christina kicks off the root on the ground, and the place exploded, her movements toward the Zeruto are very manly.

Wait, the power she put into that kick made the root explode?

Turning away from her silver hair dancing on the wind, I see Selia invoking her magic against three Zeruto.

"Hear my prayer! Become my Arrows and pierce my enemies!"

It's the chant to create the Arrow she used against the Armored Bear. With her reservoir of Magic and the Magic of whoever she prayed to combined, the shape of her spell is unique to her only. Even if the Arrows are small and lack the destructive power of the Earth Lance, they still hold enough power to kill the Zeruto. What's more, Selia is skilled enough to make the attack lock on to their targets. A total of six green arrows were made after her chant finished, then I engage two Zeruto that come at me from above. Kyun, the Arrows make a shrill sound flying through the air to it's designated Zeruto. The path which each Arrow fly leave behind a green trail of light. The Zeruto's who magic resistance is utterly nonexistent can't defend themselves against regular magic attacks, much less the magic Arrows that were made using my Dragon Magic. Each Zeruto gets two arrows, one hit the head, and one hit the abdomen, the Arrows slide through them like a hot knife through butter. Three of them have two big hollow holes one through their head and on through their chest.

They fall on to the ground and disintegrate into gray dust. Three gone, there are five remaining. Three of which are fighting Christina. One was already defeated.

With the way Christina fights, the Zeruto couldn't even touch her body. Her swordsmanship far surpasses that of Marida, her balance is superb, her attacks are accurate, and over all, she possesses tremendous physical strength.

The other two Zeruto come at her with twenty sharp bone claws on the left and right filled with murderous aura. They plan to trap her in like a bird cage. I run for the other two Zeruto with my sword in hand.

How will it attack?

Then, the speed of the Zeruto in front of me decreases, turns back and aims straight at me. The second Zeruto them comes from behind aiming for my legs. Indeed, this is an effective strategy for when you are in a two vs. one situation.

Fumu. They are surprisingly smart.

The Zeruto in the front aim to shred my head to bits, while the one coming from behind aim to crush my legs. I've practice a lot with the soldiers, and I've observed many moves in my collective experience, there are many things i still I want to do, therefore, I won't fall here.

“Clever creatures.”

I move to the left, and the Zeruto coming from behind follows up and tries to stab my waist. I use my sword to deflect the blow so it deals as little damage as possible. By the time it reaches my waist, it only does a small scratch since it lost all of its momentum. I feel a little bit of stinging pain.

Using no particular technique, I strengthen my body with Dragon Magic, and swing my sword with speed as fast as sound down toward the Zeruto. The blade slices into its head and cuts through its entire body, and perfectly splits it in two.

As for the Zeruto who was aiming for my head.

Without having anything in my left hand, I reach out and grip onto the remaining Zeruto by its head, who charges at me restlessly trying to avenge its fallen comrade.

I treat the Zeruto like an eagle with sharp talons, handling it in my hand carefully to avoid its claws. The gray skin feels rough like rock. There is no warmth in this creature, as if it were a corpse absorbing the warmth of the living. I overlay the muscle memory from my Dragon soul onto my body. I send my condolences to the parent of this child, sorry for the pain its about to experience. To a normal Human, the head of the Zeruto is hard and sturdy, but in my hand, it feels like a fragile eggshell. Even if it was for a brief moment, my muscular strength rises above what is normally possible for an adult dragon. I stop my supply of Dragon magic flowing through my body, and my strength returns to being Human.

After confirming that the two bodies of the Zeruto had turned into dust, I turn toward Christina and Selia.

“Jaramu!”

A huge snake manifested and immediately latches onto a Zeruto. The huge snake snatched the Zeruto away, leaving Christina one opponent. Christina makes quick work of it and decapitates the remaining Zeruto. The snakes fangs dig into the Zeruto’s neck, snapping it, then it slowly fades away, Selia must have runs out of Magical power to sustain the magic. Seeing that all the Zeruto had been dealt with, Christina and I sheath our swords, and we regroup.

“That was dangerous. Thanks for helping me.”

“It’s only natural for me to help. If I was in that situation, I’m sure you would lend a hand as well.”

What Selia said is true. Without Selia’s help, Christina would’ve most like been trapped between the Zerutos, resulting in heavy injuries. Christina’s reaction and power far exceeds that of normal men, but for her to take on all three and come out on top, she is certainly very skilled.

“We were the ones being chased, why did you not run away at the first sign of trouble, little Ojo-san?”

Christina, Selia, and I move our gaze toward the sound of the voice, and find a small person covered in twinkling light, who was being chased by the Zeruto. It has the shape of a little girl, around the height of one tenth(1/10) of a Human body and has sparkling light surrounding its body. It seems like the little girl is giving off light from her body.

The girl settles her long jade hair behind her back, on both sides of her head she is wearing two yellow ribbons. On the back, two tiny transparent butterfly wings extend out, scattering light particles.

“A Fairy? The cuteness makes it seems like you jump right out of a book. Fumu.”

“Waah.. It is my first time seeing a Fairy! It’s tiny and lovely!”

Upon finding out the identity of the one being chased by the Zeruto, Christina and Selia showed such feminine reactions. Especially Christina. Without her normal solemn expression clouding her pretty face, she seems like a common girl.

It was a rude thought, I should not think about her bloodline.

There is still time, the opportunities to learn about Christina will increase. I hope for a time where there will be no misunderstandings between us. So far, we have been making educated guesses about what’s going on. Its would be good if we can talk to this fairy girl and get a clue as to what is happening to the forest.

The Fairy is wearing a petal designed dress, which suits her very well, and would certainly cause quite the commotion amongst a crowd of men. However, the Fairy is wary about the appearance of strangers. It cautiously approaches us, to ask in a light and somewhat frightened voice.

“Th-Thank you for helping me.. It is Human-san? And Lamia-san, ni?”

“Ah, yes. My name is Dran. The woman with red eyes and silver hair here is Christina, and lastly the girl of the Lamia race is called Selia. We came from the nearby village of Bern to investigate the forest and try to find out why animals such as Armored Bears, and Saber Tooth Tigers showed up near our village. Can you tell us?”

“Ni! It is M-Marl. It turned while chasing, a-and lived! Th-Thank you very much! However, for everyone to go near human-san’s village….”

Seeing Marl’s upset innocent face looking down, Christina seemed eager to comfort her. Christina’s dark expression seems to fade away, and with that gone, she looks like a gentle woman.

“Right. We came here to search for clues, but we never would have guessed that those Demons are the cause of it. Marl, can you tell us when and where the Demons started to show up? Can you? It would be great if you can remember. Since we are all affected by this incident within the forest, let’s help each other out. Isn’t that right, Dran?”

“Fumu. It is as Christina said. Let’s help out each other. How about it, Marl?”

“Eto.. Eto.. Because everyone is in trouble, Marl will be happy to help you. I hope I won’t be an inconvenience to human-san.”

When I was about to respond, Christina and I noticed we are being surrounded and look up. Selia takes a notice too, but it was already too late.

Since Selia is of the Demon race, shouldn’t she be able to pick up enemy presence before Christina and me, who are Humans?

The feelings that are being directing toward us are more of wariness and suspicion than hostility. They do not have the gray skin or a Zeruto’s thirst for blood. I remove my sword and dagger from my belt and put them at my feet, showing them I am not a hostile. Selia follow my example and shut her eyes tight. Only Christina seems to be at a loss, but she follows my example and hesitantly places her sword at her feet.

With a glance I can tell there are arrows being aimed at us, and looking forward I see two people walk into view.

“It is a clan of Wood Elves.”

“I see.”

I reply to Christina with a short mutter.

It was a beautiful man and woman, with blond hair and green eyes, wearing leaf clothing with fashionable animal fur, and other materials that can be found in the forest. The placement of the mouth, nose, eyes, etc. are so perfect, it is almost as if a God molded them into the perfect position. Their long pointed ears poke out of their dazzling blond hair goes with their green clothing so well, and none of them are an exception.

There are many different kinds of Elves, differing through their race, clan, faction, etc. but the ones standing in front of us are undoubtedly Wood Elves. I heard that there was a high priest who negotiated with the Wood Elves so they would bless the forest around Bern when the village was first established. The Elven clan in front of us might be the very same one from back then.

Marl, who is between us and the Elves, is in complete panic, and fidgeting quite a lot. They have a sword on their belt, a short bow on their back, and in their hand is a spear. In addition, I already feel some of the Elves has starting to invoke their magic. If we show any sign of hostility, they would fire at us at moment notice, we might not be able to dodge if that happens.

Now then, how about we try negotiating?

[To be continued]

==========

Author’s Words

If you spot typos, please help me by pointing them out. Thank you.

While at it, some impressions, and thought would be gladly accepted.

By the way, what is your favorite monster-girl type?

I like Dragon, Lamia, and any reptilian types.

After a particular work of Mr. Hideyuki Kikuchi, I’ve also become fond of vampires.

==========

[Chapter 7]

-Black Rose-

The ancestors of the Elves are people who emigrated from the Spirit world, which exists in an entirely different dimensional plane, into our Material world. In a way, the Elven race could be called Spirits living in the Material world. There is more than one kind of Elf, ranging from Grass Elf, Sea Elf, Mountain Elf, etc…. Each race of Elf lives in their suitable habitat. Wood Elves live in the forest, with plants as their friends. (T.L. This is just sad.)(E.N. Not really, since they can just smoke weed and get high all day).(getting high without friends = sad. -masa)

By putting down our weapons, we had shown no intention of being hostile. In response, the Elves did not attack. I sensed four Wood Elves nearby. However, three are observing us while quietly hiding further under the cover of the forest.

Considering the fact they are hiding their presence from us, at the very least, I will keep their movements in check as a precaution.

From the stories, the Wood Elves who once negotiated with Bern did not express a dislike, nor any hostile intention towards mankind. With the imminent threat inside Ente however, their worries must be taken into account, and the result is their overly cautious behavior toward the slightest signs of abnormality.No one can really blame them.

One of the Wood Elves appeared directly in front of us, but maintained a distance of around ten steps. He is a young man with eyes as sharp as a hawk, pale golden hair pushed up with a dark green headband(bandana)(a bandana is not a headband. – masa). He spun down the vine extending from the big tree, wrapped in clothing with a leaf design made from the forest they love. As he descended, his long and thin fingers held onto a short bow. Upon landing on the ground, he did not draw the bow. However, his hand is resting on his quiver and he will attack us in the blink of an eye if we make any suspicious movement.

In the youth's eyes, there is an unusual sense of unease, but he placed his trust in the other Elves keeping watch over him. When an ally is in danger, its only right to keep a look out for him, that much I can easily imagine. To the Marl looking in puzzlement between them and us, the young man spoke out with a worried tone.

"Marl, come here and move away from them."

"But Gio, these Humans helped Marl.-chu"

"I understand. We will not harm them unless they attack first. So, come over here quickly."

Marl did what the Elf called Gio said, and turned toward us, lowering her head. As she flew to the Elf, she kept glancing back many times. Flying past Gio, when Marl was some distance behind him, the happy voice of a female Elf from before reaches our ears, and is multiplied with the voices of other Elves. Judging from that, they must have been very close, and worried about Marl a great deal from the bottom of their hearts.

"Marl, I told you not to venture into the forest alone. The forest is very dangerous right now."

“I’m sorry, Fio.-chu Even if it is dangerous, I wanted to know how everyone is doing in the forest.-chu”

“I know Marl, I have the same worries you do, but it’s not good if you go out alone. If something were to happen to Marl, I would be very sad.”

Gio’s features somewhat resemble the Elf girls. At the corner of the girl’s eyes, large drops of tears are forming. Marl apologizes many times over, for worrying her cherished friends. Watching the two of them, I feel good knowing we helped Marl. Then Gio turns away from Fio and Marl, looking much more relaxed than before, and faces us. Gio’s green eyes, similar to the color of the leaves, focused his gaze on my face. Those eyes look straight into mine searching for our intentions.

“Humans and Lamia. First of all, allow us to express our gratitude for saving our friend, Marl. Thank you. However, this forest is where we Wood Elves live. As long as Humans do not violate our forest, we will not violate man’s area. Those were the terms forged with the man who once ruled the area near by. Why did you step inside the forest and break the agreement?”

First, honestly express gratitude, and then follow up with duty, I like this fellow called Gio.

Their bows won’t be drawn, and fights will be avoided if I explain the circumstances properly. When beasts living deep in Ente started to appear near the village, we suspected something must have gone wrong in the forest and decided to investigate. I told them the same explanation I gave to Marl. Our guess was correct and we found out that Demonic soldiers; Zeruto, had infested the Forest of Ente.

While Gio heard my explanation, his eyebrows squinted and a deep wrinkle drew across his forehead. I think I hit the mark perfectly, Gio must have understood the reason we set foot into the forest. Briefly after explaining, I felt an unsettling feeling emiting from the hidden Elves, through spiritual senses, like disturbed water. Fio’s innocent facial expression clearly showed her grief as she recalled what happened to the forest filled with misfortune, and what is happening to the outside world.

“If that is the reason, we will not blame you for wandering inside our forest. It might be bad to send people who have experience fighting Demonic soldiers away, in case they attack again. It would also be good if we can learn how to fight them. Right now, the fight against the army of Devils from Hell is happening in Ente.

If they break through, the people living in your village may very well be involved in this conflict.” (T.L. WARRRRRRRR) (A Random Stranger: Only coming for a spot of tea.)(how did a random stranger get editing permissions. *pulls out his torture devices* You have to the count of- TOO LATE YOU’RE DEAD. -masa)

“An army of Devils?”

Christina wasn’t sure on how to respond to Gio.

People who experience living cross boundary don’t seem to be surprised, but the same thing can’t be said to Christina, a Human that spends most of its life not knowing whether or not

another world exists. Of the two possibilities I had expected, one of them hit the mark perfectly, leaving me deeply concerned.

Once upon of time, the Gods who lived in the Heaven and the Evil Gods who lived in Hell were able travel in and out of the Human realm freely. However, when I was still a Dragon, a war between the Gods broke out. When the battles finally settled, Hell, Heaven and the Human world were split into multiple dimensions. Thus, the ways which Devils and Evil Gods could take to travel into the Human world became limited, all due to the difficulty of going through multiple layers of space and time boundaries, as well as the new-found isolation of Hell. My own brethren were also temporarily involved in constructing the boundaries between these worlds.

There was a displacement between worlds, but it's hard to say if the connections between the worlds were completely cut off. There exist holes that connect the worlds, but even for someone who has high power, to be able to bring an army across the boundaries is no easy task. Even if it was possible for the leader to appear, no matter how much power or talent they have, they would be severely weakened due to the large numbers crossing over, even a high ranking God has their limits. By choosing to send the Zeruto, who are relatively weak, the leader was able to conserve a larger amount of their power, and in turn also able to mobilize more of them.

However, it's uncommon for a group consisting of a hundred lower class Zeruto to appear at a time.

Is it because the "Gate" connected to Hell has been constantly opening and closing inside Ente? If I had been constantly using my Dragon senses, then I would have been able to notice the abnormal spac…..No, now isn't the time to feel regret.

It is more important to think of what can be done for the future, rather than thinking about what could have been done in the past. We need to close the "Gate" connecting the two worlds as soon as possible.

If the "Gate" is left open for an extended period of time, Hell's corrosion would spread further and higher level Devils would be able to cross over due to the ground absorbing a large enough quantity of Hell's magic. If that happened, the destruction and death they would bring into this world would be immeasurable. In the past, I also destroyed a Legion of Hell out of vengeance. To those who would harm my family and friends, I will show no mercy. I will not hesitate to bring out my full power and reveal my Dragon soul, if it means I can protect the village and everyone in it. (T.L. Don't make Dran press the insta-Win button.)(Translation: stop dran from hacking)

While I was thinking about Hell, the Devils, and how to deal with them, Christina on the other hand had not fully recovered her composure from the shocking news Gio informed us of. That said, there have been times in the past where Devils invaded the Human world, the memory of the damage they caused would make any Human collapse on the ground in a fetal position, weeping for their lives. (T.L. I don't exactly get what this mean.)(e.g.Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

If what they said is true, and history repeats itself, as a Human being, one cannot help but become restless under the circumstances.

“When did the Devils start to appear? Has the Kingdom been informed of this matter? How do you intend to deal with this?”

“Ku. Christina-san, you shouldn’t be panicking. I’m sure Gio-san also has the same problem.”

Selia said that with her eyes still closed, and her voice an octave higher, trying to restrain Christina from going into a panic. Compared to Christina, Selia looks much calmer, and seeing me perfectly calm next to her, Christina has a confused expression. To sum it up, what Selia is implying is that the army of Devils is still a speculation.

“But Selia, this is an extraordinary claim, it just….no, I’m sorry. I got a little panicked.”

“It’s quite alright, I understand that you are worried, but this is our problem. We, who live in the forest, will without fail, knock down those who invade the forest. It is not something you should dwell on, or get involved in. It would be fine for you to return to the outside and leave the matter to us. Once the fighting settles, the incidents happening near your village will soon disappear as well. I, Gio; a Wood Elf of the Forest of Ente, put the pride of our tribe on the line and promise you this.”

With firm determination and pride shining on his face, Gio made a promise to us; strangers whom he’d just met, putting his and his comrades’ lives on the line to fight for us. However, leaving the Wood Elves to fight against the Devils, I just can’t let it happen. I do not know the fighting capabilities of Ente, but with the disadvantage in numbers, they’ll need every fighter they can gather.

“Gio, it is not because I doubt your words, but I cannot follow your decision this time. If the Devils; the enemy of all living things come, then I simply cannot return to my village dejectedly. I want to at least confirm the rank and numbers of the Devils with my naked eyes. Of course depending on the situation, I will do whatever I can to help. That’s what I have in mind, but what about Christina-san and Selia?”

“I will not answer no. It’s also something I want to confirm myself.”

“If Dran-san and Christina-san both do not come back, then I also won’t go back. When I saw the Zeruto, I had a very unpleasant feeling. That isn’t something that should exist in this world. We also helped a little, I think. Though it is not an impressive amount, we can still help Gio-san. Rather, it is only natural for us to help Gio-san, no?”

I’m not worried about Christina coming along because she made her decision knowing how dangerous Devils are, and being a Human, who unlike the Wood Elves, live with different morals and ethics. Selia also understands the situation more than I thought. I wonder if the fact she has the cursed blood running in her veins has anything to do with it. When all three of us declared our refusal to leave the forest, Gio sighs and shakes his head slightly from left and right.

“I’m thankful for your offer to help. However, the people who live in the forest will be the ones to drive away those who defiled the forest. It is the law of the forest. (T.L. Jungle rule?) This will always be true, now and forevermore, and is something that should not be changed.”

“What is preventing us from fighting together against the Devils which could potentially threaten the entire world. Is there a law which allows only the people living in the forest to fight them? If you insist on it then how about bending the law this one time? Is there a law that said the best way to protect one’s life, is to sacrifice your own and not accept help from others? Let’s work together until the battle against the Devils is settled, or at least until we have an idea of their numbers. Can you think this over?”

“…I’m thankful for the offer. However…”

Fumu. Looks like Gio truly understands the urgency of the imminent threat, but his sense of duty and pride as an inhabitant of the forest outweighed his rational thought. Can you not accept our proposal obediently?

Fio, who is hiding behind Gio, and the rest of the Wood Elves are keeping their breath and waiting for Gio’s judgement. We defeated the Zeruto excellently, and that is exactly what they need, but it will be difficult to ask for help from outsiders.

I understand where they are coming from, but I would rather be helping the world get rid of Devils than pointlessly wasting time. I do not intend to take a break, so persuading Gio into approving the plan is best. In turn I can gather whatever intelligence they have about this. Not only myself, both Christina and Selia are similarly regarded. Then Marl, who is resting on Fio’s shoulder, speaks out.

“Gio, Dran-san, Marl does not think what either of you has to say is wrong-Ni. However, the sun is setting-Ni. Night approaches as we speak.-Ni”

Just as Marl said, the sun is slowly setting on the western horizon. The time which we had spent in Ente has reached one day. Now that we are deep inside the forest, the color of the sky is divided between an azure color and the purple that it is gradually turning into. The Devils prefer the darkness, and as night was approaching, their activities will definitely increase. It is extremely dangerous to be wandering in the forest when it’s dark, no doubt. Thanks to Marl pointing that out, Gio snaps out of the hesitation face he showed us, and puts on a handsome and clear-minded expression.

“Onii-san, it will get us nowhere even if you continue the discussion. It will be dangerous to stay in the forest at night, hence I will tell these people everything we know once we return to the village, just this once. They might also change their minds after understanding the situation to some degree after all. If we do not return to the village before night comes…”

“Fio… Are you and Marl sure about this?… Then it is unavoidable. I will allow all of you to spend one night in our village. As it stands, this forest is too dangerous for anyone to be spending the night here. We are not supposed to allow outsiders to step inside our village, but given the current situation, it would only be appropriate.”

Gio, having made his decision, turned and spoke to me.

“I see. Thank you for your kindness. Should we entrust our swords to you?”

Gio shook his head in reply to my question. If you think about it, there is a possibility of Devils attacking along the way to the village. It would be better for us to have our weapons as we can handle the fight without much effort.

“No, please keep them. I’m sorry but if we are attacked, I will only be able to protect myself. We cannot afford to worry about others when that happens.”

“It’s alright, the three of us will be able to defend ourselves. Selia, it is alright to open your eyes now. You don’t need to keep them closed.”

I pick up my sword along with its sheath that were at my feet and put them back onto my belt. Christina did the same. After the two groups finished packing up, I checked Christina and Selia’s condition several times and confirmed we were ready. It did not take too long since Selia was allowed to keep her eyes open. The rest of the Elves show themselves and Gio leads the way, navigating through the forest straight for the village.

As we move through the forest, shadows from the tree branches were cast over us as the sunlight quickly recedes and the darkness engulfs us. In the dark, Selia who has infra-red vision, has no trouble following the Elves, but Christina and I are not so fortunate. (T.L. Selia OP.) However, it would be difficult to move around in the forest with normal eyesight so I applied magic into my eyes which changed them into Magic Eyes similar to Demon Eyes. (T.L. So much sharingan.)

Not too far away, Christina’s eyes shine mysteriously in the dark, like two full moons covered in a sea of blood. With the moonlight shining on her silver hair, combined with her shining red eyes and beautiful face, she appears to have some devilish features, but at the same time any girl would be full of jealousy looking at her. When compared with other races, Selia is a superb girl in her own right, but when looking at the same sex, Christina has her own mysterious beauty.

The Wood Elves move in a circle(?) around us but Fio, bringing Marl over, breaks the formation. Due to the Wood Elves having the trait of longevity, I do not know Fio’s actual age, but her jade colored eyes are shining with curiosity. Her true age aside, this girl’s appearance is still that of a teenager.

“I’m sorry for involving you in this crisis inside the forest.”

“I’m sorry~~.-Ni”

I answered a disheartened Fio and Marl, who happened to be sitting on Fio’s right shoulder, with a pleasant feeling.

“It is not your fault. You seem to be in a serious situation as far as the story goes. Having an army of Devils to fight against is never easy. Is there some sort of cooperation between Wood Elves and other races in the forest? It is necessary to repel the Devils before Human armies take matters into their own hands. Whenever Humans set foot into a forest, the results usually aren’t very good.”

I myself do not know what kind of person or King is controlling the Kingdom and its politics, but at the very least, what I've garnered from my long life is that one cannot expect good things from Humans as a whole. Thinking back, I want to learn about it some more.

"Of course everyone will, without fail, defeat the people from Hell! Not only Wood Elves, but other the races who live in the forest are working together to resolve the conflict. Besides, we are expecting assistance from our close brethren as well. When the time comes, we'll kick the Devils back to Hell!"

"Kick them! Kick them-Ni!" (T.L. This is equivalent to "Kecchon! Kecchon!")(wtf is kecchon?-masa)(T.L. Some short of references related to kicking?)

Fufu, Fio said it proudly, Marl mimicked her, and puffed out her (small? naw, **tiny**.)chest. Watching these two being close together gives me a heartwarming feeling.

"I see, 'Kecchon! Kecchon!' was it? Haha, you two are full of vigour. If it is possible, I want to help both of you too, but it all depends on whether Gio permits it or not."

"I don't know what Onii-san is thinking in his head but the Chief will be the one to decide whether or not it is necessary to borrow your power. Granted, our mission has been fulfilled, and we are returning to our village. We could have done it even without your help."

Fumu. With the number of Elves being much fewer than other races, are they even making children go outside the village to protect it, by all means? The people from Gio and Fio's village once set foot outside the forest and met with our founders, we recall it well. If our village were to receive a request for help, they would no doubt help in every way they can.

The Elves around us slow down to a walk as I was chatting with Gio's sister because of the sudden change in our surroundings. Since even I do not know when the Devils are going to attack, it is safe to take this precaution. Selia, who disliked violence, loosened up after seeing Fio and I chatting and slid up to my left to join the conversation (T.L. Not sure if scare of jealous. Hmm). Fio and Marl don't seem to be wary of Selia being a Lamia in the least, maybe they have friends from the Lamia race.

"What is your village like, Fio-san? Do lots of Fairies like Marl live there?"

"Our village is located on the far west side of Ente. Fairies like Marl are flower Fairies but there are other beings too, like Dryads living here. There are also the Wolfmen and Arachne settlements near our village and are now joining force to fight against the Devils. They are fighting as hard as we are."

"Are the non-combatant Elves safe?"

"Yes. The distance between the villages and battle ground is quite significant and the news of an attack has not arrived. Other villages requested minor assistance so we sent people to help them already. It's safe to say everything is fine. You'll only spend one night in our village so afterward, please head back obediently as you were told. There are some people who won't

show courtesy to Humans, and it has been like that since the old days. I'm not sure if they will be any different to Selia, being a Lamia."

Even in this dire situation, Fio apparently chats with strangers without being shy and opens up to Selia immediately. What's more, she talks to her like talking to a friend, no honorifics at all. Occasionally the topic points toward Christina, but she only answers as much as needed, nothing more, nothing less. With the conversation going well, Selia finally relaxes and gradually she smiles, and so does Christina, these three have became friends already.

The open conversation between the girls cause the other Wood Elves' expression to tighten, and Gio, the other Elves, and I all start to take precaution of the surrounding. The other Wood Elves men sometimes glance at Fio's loose mouth with a complicated expression. I call out to Gio, who is leading in the front. I would think that this young man would be against this….no?

"Do we need to stop the ladies and their stories? If it gets too loud, it could get the Devils' attention."

"Devils will attack with or without Fio being cheerful. It's better to let them converse rather than to stay silent and have fear loom over us. With Fio's bright smile, it helps me relax. It's a wonder what a smile can do. Since long ago, she has always been interested about what's outside the forest. You don't have to worry too much about their voices. Most of the sounds are being absorbed by the trees and leaves anyway. It won't get very far."

I see a warm and caring brother-sister relationship in Gio's face. It is as Gio said, the trees and leaves absorb most of the sound they are making so it probably won't be a big problem.

"In that case, I won't say a thing about it."

As we continue traveling through the forest with the girls chatting loudly, the sun has already set below the horizon, the dark forest gives off an eerie feeling. The flow of the wind changes, the noises from the branches rattling also increase, the Wind Spirits screams in the air, and the groans of the Earth Spirits transmit through the ground. Gio suddenly stops in surprise and raises his voice in astonishment.

"What the? Their movements became quicker all of a sudden."

The peaceful atmosphere had vanished and the feeling of surprise and fear has gotten into Fio and creeps its way into the others.

"Onii-san, we need to hurry up and return to the village quickly!"

"A…Ah! The forest, the wind, will everyone be killed-Ni!?" (T.L. Full Fairy Panic.)

Fio and Marl fall into a state of complete panic, on their faces show innocent impatience. Christina and Selia also felt the immediate abnormality. Not only me, but everyone who noticed the screams are fully prepared to attack(battle mode?). Gio starts to talk to the two.

"You two, go on ahead to the village along wit-"

I interrupt Gio and chant my magic. (T.L. The Wizard has shown himself!)

“Oh Wind! Hear my voice, accelerate and grant us speed!”

It is a type of magic that allowed me to interfere with the flow of the wind and can speed up our travel. I had applied the magic on everyone currently present. Gio cannot help but be surprised at me using such magic and even more surprised when he sees everyone has been wrapped in the same magic spell. I call out to Gio who is still surprised.

“It is an auxiliary Wind attribute magic. It will help us move faster. It’s best to use it in situation where we are in a hurry. Has the village been attacked, or is it something different?”

“…Maybe. To survive, it best if you all leave now.”

“I do not intend to go back now. I did not come this far just to turn back at the first sign of trouble. Also, this is in the interest of Humanity.”

“I’m with Dran. We will help as much as we can. We’ve already said it many times already.”

“I share the same opinion as Dran-san and Christina-san!”

“This is a life and death situation. Everyone in the village would understand if we ask for your assistance. I would like to borrow your power. Its can’t be helped, people from outside, please assist us in this fight.” (T.L. Somehow I can hear Dran’s laugh full of satisfaction.)

“Gio, you are quite graceful. I’ve said it before and I will say it again, I don’t mind helping you.”

Gio accepted our help and bow his head in bitterness.

“I’m sorry. I’m very grateful for your help.”

I answer the bowing Gio.

“Think of it as a favor. Now, let’s go.”

We run like beasts in the cover of darkness, the miasma of Hell turns the air colder with the Devils invasion. The Elves fighting to expel these creatures out of our world will turn this forest into their grave. I am told, Gio’s village has houses built into big trees and is said to have around 500 Fairies and Wood Elves living together. If the Devils launch a surprise attack, only by being there and watching the aftermath, can one tell what kind of horror the Devils bring.

We run as fast as we can, without taking a break, we push on through the night as the moonlight shines over us. We stop when we see a wall made of trees covered with ivy and thorns, all tangled up making a rather excellent defensive structure. There are sections of the wall that are breached and the site looks severely damage.

Moonlight shines on the Devils, who let loose a war cry around a bon fire outside the wall. Watching the Devil Army march under the moonlight, it is as if we are living in a nightmare. We simply cannot produce any sound to express our shock, the Elves, Christina, and Selia are frozen in shock and fear as they watch the sinister army, the enemies of all living things,

making their move. Selia's face looks like it has been drained of life, and Christina only manages to let out small noises.

Before the Devils attack, this place would have been filled with blooming flowers of many different colors, red, yellow, purple, white, blue, green, etc,… on the houses and walls, however, they were all destroyed, trampled upon, and lost their lives and beauty at the hands of the invaders. For the Wood Elves, this wall isn't just something they created to protect themselves, it is something they feel connected with, because the wall itself is made up of plants. Across sections on the wall, Wood Elves, beastmen, and Humanoid looking insects(?), are attempting to fight back, by shooting arrows, throwing rocks, and chanting spells.

The gate which was supposed to be a weakness doesn't seem to budge at all, even though part of the wall has collapsed. Zeruto aren't the only ones attacking the village. There are Devils that are about twice my height, with muscles like steel, and clad in thick armor. Their arms are the size of a log, the Devils possessed immense strength, they are called Zarutsu. Joining them, there are also Devils with the lower body of a beast on all fours, possessing sharp claws, their upper Humanoid body also wears armor. Their red eyes shining through their helmet's gap, their right hand held a spear and in the other a round shield, they are call Ganafu.

I look closely at the ground where the Devils are fighting, invading their ranks are roots and thorns skewering them through their torsos. Those roots and thorns were weaved by magic and their source are the Elves on top of the wall. The Elves' ability to handle the Devils exceeds my expectation.

This causes a huge amount of uproar and makes the Devils fall into a state of confusion, making a big cloud of dust. The Devils started to surround the entire village so we collect ourselves and move to the southwest area. Then, taking a glimpse at the north side of the village, we see four huge shadows charging at the wall with terrifying speed.

It turns out to be a huge Ganafu with its lower body of a beast, gripping a spear and a shield like the rest. However, its isn't wearing armor on its upper body. Its body, spear, and shield drenched in the blood of its fallen enemies. (T.L. Not wounds, just blood.)

The height of the Ganafu is roughly three times mine, not to mention it possesses strength and six sharp claws on each foot which can kill with ease. When the the monster charged, it seems an unstoppable force of destruction. The massive Devil charged, brushing the wind aside and let out an incredibly loud roar. Unlike the lower class Devils, this one has a mind and a clear goal.

"Clear the way!! Hahaha, anyone who stands in Georudo's path will be crushed into dust!"

As the person who introduce himself as Georudo roars, the Devil forces reorganize and charge forward along with him. Georudo, stomping on many Zeruto and Zarutso, charges forward and violently collides against the wall. The moment Georudo reaches the wall, the Elves reinforced it with magic, but the momentum drives the calvary right through the wall. The shock wave created by the impact is immense and makes some people on the wall fall to their knees and throws others right off.

The shock wave created was so loud, that for a few moments, no one seems to be able to hear anything except a buzzing noise. When Georudo breaks through the wall of trees, and knocks them down, it is as if I can feel the souls of the plants screaming in my mind. When the wall was knocked down, the Devil army cheers, and in their bloodlust become even more excited. Even Christina and Selia feel the trees' pain as they listen to the menacing cheers of the monstrosities.

Maybe it is because we are a group of Humans and a Lamia, we do not understand the unimaginable pain the nature loving Wood Elves are feeling, as it is something that is beyond what words can describe. Gio, Fio, the other Wood Elves, and Marl all stop and endure the pain of the forest that they are experiencing both in mind and body. Gio's handsome face is covered in sweat and his skin is so pale it look like the color of a white candle.

Regardless, despite stopping for a brief moment, they pick up the pace again almost immediately. With the crime of hurting their families and friends, the Devils from Hell have now become the target of pure anger from the forest inhabitants. I did not miss Gio's hawk eyes burning with anger and turning into rage. In my line of sight, after Georudo knocked down the wall, starts to tramples his legs on the fallen trees and pulls out his spear which was impaled into the tree.

"Haa~ Even though this wall withstood countless Devils, it couldn't even put up a fight against my spear? It's nice to listen to the sound of destruction. My spear and I triumph yet again."

The strong wall made up of trees, after suffering the attack of the Devil, now has a gaping hole in the middle of it, and the interior is wide open to the Devils' onslaught. The magic which the Elves used was something along the regeneration type, but with the speed Georudo pierced through, it was much faster than the regeneration process. Even now, the ivy is still trying to grow and patch up the gap. What's worst, Georudo is planning to charge again and expand the gap even wider than it was previously. In that instant, I decided to release my Dragon power at Georudo and blow him to dust, but something happened. (T.L. Cockblock to the max.)

The ground where Georudo is standing, splits apart and massive thorns grow out of the earth and binds the Ganafu to the earth.

"Such impertinence!! Do you think this will be enough to bind Georudo down?!?"

Georudo's massive lower body is being snared and as he tries to break free, the thorns and the ground slowly become covered with in blood. If one pays close enough attention, one can see the thorns which are growing out of the ground are extremely sharp, and whenever it makes contact with the Devil's skin, dark black blood oozes out under the night sky. The magical black thorns coming from the abyss has many roses blooming on it. The black rose makes me think of a black sun absorbing all the moonlight from the sky.

"Guooo, these disgusting black roses are blooming and absorbing my blood!!"

Georudo shout as he uses his right hand to pull out the thorns trying to free himself, attempting to wreak havoc upon the thorns binding him, however the thorns do not give out. As Georudo continues to struggle, the thorns cut deeper and deeper into his flesh, slowly but

surely, Georudo starts raging as his wounds continue to worsen. However, no matter what he does, the thorns remain persistent and hold Georudo in place. Suddenly, a new figure appears in front of Georudo.

The figure looks very graceful, wearing enticing black clothing under the moonlight. It is a woman. Her beauty is first rate and her figure is still in her prime. However, she looks very mysterious. Her black eyes look at Georudo with a cold gaze, as cold as a blizzard in the northern mountains, and the thorns which had roses blooming over them tighten around the Devil. Standing before the wall, her body is revealed to us and one can say that it is a body that only exists in a dream. Her body is perfectly balance, her rich breasts and butt shows no signs of impurities. Her waistline is also nice and thin. She has all the right curves in all the right places. Simply put it, it is a perfect womanly body. It is a figure far superior to Christina's under-developed body. (T.L. Ouch! Even the dragon said it is hopeless for her!)

She wears a jet black dress which does a good job of emphasizing her luscious curves. Her dress is split down the middle in a V-shape, stopping just below her groin, and reveals her fair skin colored legs in transparent stockings. Her dress has quite the revealing design, exposing her bare shoulders, and sinful mountains valley which attract the gazes of men to her chest.

She possesses both ideal physical beauty as well as a sensual allure. Her skin looks as white as silk and is superlative, it also looks like it feels like silk as well. The wind seems to be playing with her radiant black hair. In the darkness, her raven black hair flows in the wind like a waterfall, and its color looks exactly identical to the color of the black roses blooming on the thorns binding Georudo. When her hair is brushed aside by the wind, I am finally able to get a glimpse of her beautiful face.

"Rose-Ni! It's the power of Black Rose-Ni! Iyaaa~~"

Marl, who moments ago was shaking in fear, speaks up lively. What Marl said has some truth to it, there is indeed a spirit presence being emitted from the so called Black Rose.

"Yes. It is the Black Rose, the strongest spirit in the Forest of Ente. Otherwise known as, Diadora."

"Diadora?"

The lower half of the Ganafu is drenched in its own blood. Seeing Diadora look down upon the beast, she looks as majestic as a Queen mandated by Heaven. While Diadora overlooked Georudo with her icy gaze, Selia and I looked on with admiration.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 8]

-The Demonic Flower Princess and The Demonic Spear-man-

We make haste and hurry over to the defensive wall as the commander of the Devil army, Georudo, is bound by the vines of Black Rose, unable to escape. Since the Devils are encircling and attacking the Wood Elf villages wall of trees, and since we are few in numbers, we are able to move swiftly between the Devil's rank. As we get closer to the wall, Gio send out a message using wind magic to the Wood Elves on top of the wall and they happily provide us covering fire with arrows, and weave magic so the roots and thorns will hold the Devils off.

The Demonic soldiers who noticed our appearance and chased after us, turn around as the Wood Elves provide us with cover. Before, they were chasing us with our back wide open, now that they turn around, the situation is reversed. While we continue running, Gio and Fio are shooting arrows and from the look of it, they are very good at it since almost every arrow found its destination. I too, while running, use the opportunity of the enemy's movement being cut off, and speak to the wind to form Wind blades, directing them at their necks. I left the defensive role to Christina to cut down any Devils that got too close with her incredible strength. As we are arriving at the wall, several Devils show up in our path, so I shoot a magic arrow through them and clear the path for us.

"Everyone! It will only be a little more until we get there. However, don't relax your guard just yet. Let's go!"

Gio turns back and gives the group encouragement, in which everyone replies in full spirits. It is nice to see that even in the midst of all this chaos, their bonds are as strong as ever.

Thorns and tree roots continue to come out of the ground and prevent the Devils from closing in on us. Some of which get in our way but we keep running without reservation. When we nearly make it, the thorns and roots stop attacking and instead, clear a way for us. As we run through, a dozen or so Zeruto follow us, I turn and kick the nearest thorns to slow them down and start my magic chant.

"Oh Forces of Nature! Hear my voice. Form my arrows. Allow me to shoot the enemy before me! Energy Rain!"

Immediately, twenty arrows made of pure energy gather above me, and under the gleam of moonlight, I hold out my left arm, aim for the Zeruto and fire all twenty arrows at them. In the cover of night, the arrows shine a dazzling white flying through the air and leave behind many trajectory lines of the same color. All of the Zeruto jump away in different directions trying to avoid the attack. When the arrows find their marks, the sound of multiple explosions intensely shake the night sky.The arrows made from my magical power explode in the air, creating a scenery like flowers endlessly blooming in the night sky. The sky is full of glory tonight.

We finally arrive next to the wall, upon closer inspection I can not even locate a gap can in it because the trees are growing so tightly next to one another. Yet, when Gio approached the wall, the roots of the trees intertwined with each other come loose, separating and leading upward, changing into a passage.

Does this wall function as a stair or ladder for friendlies and at the same time, provide them with protection? If that is the case, then there isn't a reason for a gate to exist, because the wall already has a function acting like a gate in the first place.

Gio takes the lead and heads up the stairs made of varied tree roots, joining the Wood Elves on top of the wall. Once on top, we get a birds eye view on the flow of the battle and the mass of demonic soldiers swarming at various locations in the area. Right now, it's an excellent opportunity for the devils to invade via the stairs, if they start to gather at the entrance it would be very bad. I make my decision, stop and go back down the stairs to make sure that doesn't happen. If anything, this judgement is the bare minimum one would expect the enemy to make, fortunately, I am not the only one going back down.

Selia is on my right and Christina is on my left, the three of us descend the stairs with the same goal in mind.

Kyaa!

Selia lets out a small scream as the interior shakes slightly, both Christina and I come to a halt. I feel an increase in the level of magic and Christina seems to somewhat understand the situation. If a large number of demonic soldiers comes up the stairs against three people, the best we can do is buy time.

"Christina-san, Selia, lets use a slightly bigger magic attack for this one, then we can retreat onto the wall."

From the pouch I tied on the left of my belt, I take out a round white crystal stone and hand it to Christina.

"Akira Spirit Stone. It's a stone with very high purity. It's something rarely seen even in the Academy."

Christina raise her voice in a surprised manner as I hand over the Akira Spirit Stone to her, which has a unique magical power. For something like magic, it can crystalize naturally over a long period of time and bind with ore veins near the source, I simply use this fact and artificially created a magic stone. In this case, I dug the stone out of the ground at a place where I once concentrated my power and reorganized the leyline when I was still my my mother's womb. When I use magic, I can draw from the magic reservoir contained in the stone instead of my own, and I can also use that to help others in a time of need.

"These were discovered somewhere near my village a while ago. A moderate amount were sold and we made a very good good profit off of it. Selia, this is for you."

"Yes. Ah, could this be the one Dran-san found at the swamp?"

"That's right. I don't have a use for them, so don't be reserved and please use them to their fullest."

I pass the Akira Spirit Stone to Christina while Selia on the other hand, receives the Earth Spirit Stone. After the Berserk Earth spirit met its end at the Kobold tribe's old village grounds, the Spirit stone was retrieved by me. They are something I happened to bring along,

and unexpectedly found a good use for them. Selia receives the Spirit stone with both hands and starts to infuse her own magic and the magical power within the stone together. Christina, with her silver hair reflecting the moonlight, grasps the Akira stone from my left hand and uses it as a catalyst to supply the magic going into her long sword, the result is her weapon's effectiveness increasing greatly.

"Oh, Wind Force of Nature! With my mortal life, I ask thou, the forever free wind breeze, to turn innumerable blades of the wind into the Raging Tornado!"

Wood elves on top of the trees notice that we are going to use strong magic, because of the utterance of a strong magical chant. Pulling back the roots and trees in the passage, the Wood Elves create an obstacle made up of roots coming out of the ground, blocking the view of the Devil soldiers completely. At a loss, the Devil soldiers put all their might into holding up their shields, trying to protect themselves from the Wind magic whirlpool which Christina pushes forward. The advanced Wind level magic that the Christina exercised generates a tornado like the name suggest, and shreds any Devils who unfortunate enough to stand in its path. The powerful tornado carries the dirt up, high into the heaven with its long body resembling that of a Ryou, stirring the air violently. (T.L. Ryou = Eastern Dragon.)

"Oh spirit in the Earth! Change thou body into a sharp spear. For mine enemy, has become thine."

The magic Christina and I use is a type of magic which intervenes with the laws of nature, causing phenomenons which normally happen in the spiritual world to occur in the physical world, but there is also magic which doesn't involve specific intonation, and the way to use spirit magic is to exchange your will with the spirits which reside in a different world. There are also high ranking Spirits which are called Spirit King. They hold enormous authority over the elements. If I were to call upon their help, I would need to prepare a ceremony of a sorts. In fact, the spirits Selia is calling upon isn't so highly ranked.

However, because Selia is a Lamia, for her to call upon the Earth spirit is applaudable, granted with the power of the Earth Spirit Stone, it reduces the burden on her greatly.

The Raging Tornado swallows innumerable devil soldiers, and tears them to bits. The heavy rumbling sound of the earth rising and forming into the shape of a spear with the length approximately three arm spans of an adult. The spear fires off and penetrates Zeruto, Ganafu, Zarutsu and anything in its path without discrimination, scattering their remains in multiple directions. Using the power of the Earth Spirit stone, Selia creates a defensive wall to slow down the incoming devils.

"The two of them are doing flashy things, but I won't lose either. Obey me, Forces of Nature! Gather.. *Gather*.. ***Gather..!*** Compress and Burst! Explosion!!!"

I aim for the place where the devils escaped Christina and Selia's attack, and let the explosion magic run loose. I extracted an enormous amount of energy from my dragon soul that dwarfs Human standards, compress it into my left hand and slowly form its shape into a photosphere shining with a radiant white color. The photosphere emits intense light, like a miniature sun in my hand, I aim it dead center of the mass of Demonic soldiers, and launch it.

The miniature sun hit the ground causing an explosion phenomenon like the name stated, and blew away the whole area around the middle of the enemy's force. A roaring sound stirs the air and blew away the trees moments after the impact. The surrounding wind cries so loud that I can't even hear any more, and briefly after, our whole body receives the shock wave transmitting through the air. It would be hard to imagine any Devils, who were swallowed up by the light, surviving that attack because the shear heat wave alone would incinerate them into ashes instantly. Besides, they are mere puppets dancing in the palm of their master, this would serve as a scissor, quickly freeing them from the strings binding them.

After the shock wave passes and the light fades, there isn't a single trace of the enemy left. Asserting the area, a few trees has been blown off but all in all, the landscape remains mostly the same.

Us three magicians look at the field from left to right surveying the remains further trying to locate any Devils that may remain, but it is safe to say that our objective succeeded, to buy time that is. We look at each other and then we head back up the stairwell, to spot Gio with an amazed face looking at us and what we have done. Now that it is brought to my attention, this is the first time Gio has seen us fight, no? Sure we had to use the Akira Spirit stone but looking at the scale which we had demonstrated our fighting power, Gio must have approved of our being helpful, no doubt.

"From what you have done, I feel we will need to depend on you in this matter."

"I simply wanted to show that we are reliable."

Gio accepted my answer as so, but he seems to be suffering from a headache and is swaying left and right. I'm not feeling the headache Gio is feeling so there isn't anything I can say. The cause might be due to the magic Christina and Selia used, it was more powerful than I thought.

We then see three Wood Elves climb up the stairwell to join Gio and ask about our appearance. The explanation is simple, since we are Humans, a Lamia and definitely not Devils, identification is simple, but what might be a problem is providing proof of us holding no hostile intentions.

"Gio, who exactly are they? From the look of it, they seem to be outsiders…"

"They said they came into the forest to check the situation. They are also our benefactor who helped Marl. And they said they are on our side. Their power, it is as you have witnessed."

"Gio-ni everything is fine here but Diadora's situation can turn dangerous very quickly. -ni"

"Onii-san, Dran-san, lets hurry over to the Northern area. If it's one-on-one, I have no doubt Diadora will prevail, but if more opponents of Geo's level show up, I don't think it will be good."

Marl and Fio are right. From what I've seen, the Devils cannot fully utilize their power to its full extent and the power of the so call Black Rose, Diadora, isn't something to joke about either. However, if three or more Georudo like beings show up at the north side. That isn't a very favorable situation for us and it will turn the flow of the battle to the Devils' side quickly.

Gio tightens his expression, soaking in the words of his little sister, and then speaks out firmly.

“The forest requires protection right now. We will proceed to the northern side as it is. Dran, Christina, Selia, I’m sorry but we will be depending on you.”

I nod at Gio’s firm yet still hesitant words, backed up with great confidence. This young man doesn’t seem to be taking this debt too lightly into account.

“Ahh. Please rely on us.”

Christina, Selia, and I too give Gio a clear answer and nodding at him.

♦ ♦ ♦

When Dran and the others arrived at the wall, I look down from the top at the queen of the night, Black Rose, who is looking down upon Georudo being bound to the earth under the moonlight, moving her red lips vividly. One would expect them to be black, like the colour of the flower, instead of red. However, from those fascinating lips, words that are cold enough to send chills down one’s spine are spoken.

“Your crimes are counted… the case in which the flowers were offended, trees were injured, bugs were crushed, animals were killed, the cases in which you took the people’s lives in the forest and the case in which the forest was smeared… They are endless.”

In response to those cold words from Diadora, Georudo laughs its off as if he were hearing his achievements. Even when his whole body is tied down by Diadora’s thorns, he doesn’t seem to worry about his life in the slightest.

“Fuahahahaha, crimes? Are those crimes to you? They are rather weak crimes if you aske me. Bah! If one doesn’t want to be killed, it is sufficient to kill the threat before it. Because they were weak and couldn’t even put up a fight, they were killed by us. Shouldn’t you say that being weak in itself, is a crime? The people of this world are such a laughingstock if they don’t even understand this much. Fuahahahaha!!”

Suddenly, from Diadora’s black pupils, a tinge of joy can be seen, to think such warmth could exist within those cold eyes. (E.n. This sadist was waiting for this moment~)

The thorns become tighter making gishri sounds as the thorns scape against the Devil’s lower body further, increasing the amount of blood on the ground. Georudo clenches his teeth and endures the pain but no scream of agony was heard.

“For everyone coming from Hell, you included. I will also announce one more crime for all of you. It’s ‘They were weak, so they were destroyed by me.’ ”

The words which were spoken by Georudo were taken and used directly against him. Diadora states that as she points her right hand up into the sky, like a piece of artwork. As her arm is pointing up at the sky, a huge shadow moves from the wall toward Diadora from behind. The shadow was cast by numerous roots and thorns intertwining with each other and formed a figure that looks like a serpent or a Ryou under the shining moonlight.

Diadora, using her power as the Spirit of the Black Rose, created a thorn covered Ryou look-alike with black roses blooming all over its body. Diadora focuses her energy at the tip of the serpentine mass of thorns, which becomes wrapped in a menacing dark aura. The feeling of anger and rage, which can't be describe words alone are reflected off of Diadora's powerful negative emotions through the beautiful black rose.

"It is unpleasant for you to even **exist** in this world. It is a crime for you to come to this world in the first place."

Diadora mercilessly swing her arm down, serving as a signal for execution and the spear flew down at a great speed aiming straight for the Devil's head. If a Demon Lord or Evil God were to take that attack, most likely they wouldn't walk away unscathed and would be quite unhappy. Georudo's chest now has a big hole going through it, where the thorns pierced, black roses bloom. There is already no longer a means for Georudo to resist, however, in the evening atmosphere, there's a presence of somebody else watching the fight and the air turns cold rapidly.

A mocking voice rang out in a condescending manner.

"Ara~ Ara~"

A silhouette dances in the night sky, like a petal fluttering in the wind. The girl's shadow is like a flower that just bloomed from a bud, she has the appearance of a small teenage girl. The figure landed on top of Diadora's spear, cutting it off from the rest while the part she touched rapidly lost power the moment the girl landed on it. Not only is its power decreasing, it is also crumbling away. The great spear Diadora once created, now looks like it died a thousand years ago. The thorns crack and crumble, followed by Diadora's cool-headed attitude.

"Yo, Geo. You're too careless."

The small figure kicks off the black spear, dances in the air, and then finally lands on the Georudo's left shoulder.

Even an expert performer, who receives praise from all over the world for their feats, would have their hearts ignite with flames of jealousy at what this elegant girl is capable of. Standing on Georudo's shoulder, the figure's face is finally revealed. The soft outline of her lips look like a small petal, the arrangement of her eyes and nose are lovely, imagine the prettiest girl people can think up, she seems to have become reality.

However, with the dark red dress delicately wrapped around her body, while being surrounded by a menacing red aura, the mood doesn't last long and soon turns frigid. Her eyes look as beautiful as topaz, but corrupted.

You are openly mocking her, one can easily see how enraged Diodora is. Doesn't she know it is driving her mad? When toying with darkness, one should already be aware of the answer.

Then, a smile is shown on her pretty lips, a smile that would catch anybody off guard.

It is the smile of someone who enjoys watching others being trampled upon in pain. It is the smile of someone who looks down on others and takes in their cries of hatred unfazed. It is the smile of someone who wants to hear the screams of those who are in despair, and to have them scream even more. It may have the appearance of a cute little girl but inside, the evil personality of a Devil exists.

"Fun~ I, Rafflesia, went out of my way to help you."

Rafflesia, that seems to be the name of this devilish girl.

Rafflesia tilted her head at Georudo, telling him those words, showing her long bright red hair reaching her thighs, it is divided into four sections, each being tied up by a black ribbon at the nape of her neck. Her posture looks adorable, with her hair and dress having the same color, calmy breathing, a smile floats across her lips.

"Araa, looks at his bluffing. However, because you're the vanguard, you charged into the battle, experienced pain and was even made fun of. With this, you have accomplished your role *well* enough."

When Rafflesia brings her fingertips to touch the thorns holding Georudo in place, the same phenomenon occurs and turns the plant into dust. When Georudo is finally freed, he stands up shuddering slightly and then stomps on the black rose thorns.

Without the help of Rafflesia, Georudo would have been unlikely to escape Diadora's thorns, and now, he's glaring at Diadora full of humiliation because he was forced to accept help from his comrade. If it were someone who couldn't utilize defensive magic well, they would faint in front of that Devil's gaze.

"My duty is to kill and trample upon whoever and whatever stands in my path in this war. Don't go and judge my actions as you like."

"Is that the only thing you are thinking of? Waaa? Georg.. and even Geren thought the same thing too~

Fufu. The Black Rose Onee-sama is giving us a scary look. Do you have anything you want to say to us?"

Diadora's gaze shifted focus from Georudo to Rafflesia, it is obvious now that the beautiful Black Rose is recognizing her as a formidable opponent. Georudo no longer reflects in her eyes, instead, what is there right now, in Diadora's eyes, is the figure of the Devil girl showing a mocking gesture.

"You. The evil existence whom not only like to take away life, but to endlessly inflict pain…"

Giri, the sound of Diadora's gritting her white teeth together, enraged. Compared to the hatred she felt against Georudo, her feelings now are on a completely different level. The sound her teeth is are making, reflects how much anger she's feeling towards the Devils.

"What is this? Does that hold any significance? I do recall many of my actions, but then again I've done a lot of things. Oh… Are you perhaps talking about the withering Water Lily

spirit's screams? When her energy was slowly being drained away and when near death, she muttered 'Help.' Maybe? Come to think about it, she was chopped to bits by a hundred Zeruto afterward, no?"

With every sentence Rafflesia utters, Diadora's flaming hatred intensifies and her black aura changes into a deeper shade of darkness

Rafflesia is speaking in a small voice, trying to remember what had happen, while holding her hands together ot her chest. Bliss seems to be written all over her face as she recalls the slaughter.

"Ohhh! I understand now…Diadora. The Spirit of the Red Rose was crying, seeking help from you as I absorbed her to death, wasn't she? Your energy is similar to that Rose, are you by chance sisters, Diadora?"

"Hmm. I am indeed Diadora. Everyone was a friend and the person whom you killed was my family. How dare you.. ***How dare you!!!***"

Seeing the flames of hatred that would incinerate anything, burning even more intensely in Diadora's eyes, Rafflesia decides to even further provoke her and lets out a smile. What a cruel smile it is.

"Hahaha, Ha~ Ha~~. To be getting worked up over something so stupid. Isn't its a given that you can prosper more than before, now that the other flowers have been eliminated? You should be glad that your competition has decreased. It would be nice if I could get some words of gratitude."

That was the limit of Diadora's anger. Diadora's urge to kill explodes, and the atmosphere instantly filled with incredible malice coming from Diadora. Without wasting a single second, Diadora rushes straight for Rafflesia.

"You!! I won't allow you to live any longer!!"

Zawa(*rustle*). The sound of countless black thorns growing out of the ground. Diadora's black hair flies in the the wind like waves in an ocean of black, along with her thorns. Every single thorn coming out possesses an immense amount of magical power and combined with Diadora's malice, they turn into whips of steel. If a human were to be pierced by them, their meat would be shredded in an instant and their bones would shatter into a million pieces.

Even if I covered my body with thick iron plated armor, I wouldn't be about to fend off those whips. I don't think the Devil with the appearance of a little girl, Rafflesia, can defend against those thorns. But when the thorns are about to reach her, Rafflesia holds out her left hand and blue light starts to wrap around it. At that moment, the fog extend out the touch the thorny whips approaching Rafflesia, absorbing their vitality in the process and turning them into a cloud of dust.

"Didn't you learn it by now? I, too, am a Flower Spirit. But unlike you, who blooms on the common ground, I am a Flower Spirit that has bloomed in my paradise.

A Spirit Flower from Hell needs neither blood nor life to bloom, I am Rafflesia. All life is mere food for me to bloom beautifully, anything can be an offering. Hmm, how about the wind?"

"Tsk, this is?!"

When the fog from Rafflesia's hand touch the breeze it suck up the energy the wind possesses. The wind then ceased drifting, and slowly disappears, losing all activities it once had. The Devil continues the act of absorbing all life energy. The fog then approaches Diadora and absorbs the life force from the wall of trees and everything in its path.

Wherever the fog touches, the place loses its freshness and withers away in an instant. The trees around the place where Georudo created a hole were also deprived of life by Rafflesia. When the fog gets to where Diadora is standing, she kicks off the ground and lands on top of the wall. As she is in the air, the slit on her black dress flutters in the air and it seems like Black Rose flourishes, even when off the ground. Diadora then attacks the pretty Rafflesia using her thorny whips in every direction as she's landing.

"You really don't learn do you? No matter how many time you try, it will never work."

Fufu. On Rafflesia's small lips, a smile appears.

In spite of Diadora's effort, only disappointment comes out of it. Rafflesia once again uses her fog and reduces all the thorns to dust.

"Hahaha, Thanks for the meal!~"

After Diadora lands, she continues to challenge Rafflesia, and keeps sending thorns at her as soon as one dies. The thorns continue to reproduce endlessly, but even for Diadora who is very strong, using power on this scale is like pouring water into a bottomless pit. Rafflesia on the other hand continues her idle act of letting the fog soak in the thorns' energy. While Diadora continues to waste power, Rafflesia, absorbing the magic, is growing even more powerful and hasn't used even a little effort.

"I could have probably taken a nap by now. The time I'll spend waiting for your power to run out is completely worthless and tiresome. I think I'll take your life directly from your body. That beautiful black hair, fair skin, and red lips will all dry up. Fufu, wouldn't it be a shame?"

Rafflesia says such a thing to Diadora and steps toward her. The pretty princess of Demonic Flower has such a wicked personality at heart, declaring that she will take the Queen of the Black Rose without mercy. Diadora in her last resort, bundled her thorns around Georudo's spear and threw it, with all her might, trying to skewer Rafflesia.

"Tsk. So uninteresting."

Time and time again, the thorns die due to Rafflesia's power, however, Georudo's spear is different. The thorns approaching Rafflesia all wither away one after another but just when they were on the verge of disappearing completely, at the center, a vivid white object flies forward. When it strikes, Rafflesia's whole body shook, blood flowing out as her hand holds onto the spear and her eyes watch Diadora smirk.

“B-blood. M…my blood. For me to be wounded….”

Rafflesia tremble as she see her hands dye with blood and Diadora floats another smile across her lips.

“Beautiful roses are thorny. Learn it ok? Even if it only for a short amount of time, learn the pain it can inflict.”

To successfully fighting against Rafflesia, thorns alone were insufficient, a blow with a hidden weapon, which doesn’t have life energy in it, was sufficient in dealing with such an opponent. Pierce Rafflesia using a weapon, such was Diadora’s plan. Hearing Diadora’s words, Rafflesia expanded the blue fog around her body and her bloodthirst also increased. After a brief moment, Rafflesia’s body seems to be covered in a pillar of blazing blue flame.

“This is unforgivable, absolutely unforgivable! You’ve done the one thing which can’t be forgiven. For the Black Rose which bloom on the lowly ground to damage me. I’ll absorb you painfully, and kill you!!”

The atmosphere is now filled with murderous intent coming from Rafflesia. Diadora’s body shook slightly as she is hit with the intense feeling. However, Rafflesia isn’t the only one feeling anger and hatred. The black magic seems to agree with Diadora and overflows from Diadora’s whole body, like pure darkness, as if there is no consumption of the magic at all, new magic and energy surround her body.

“It may be rough but that’s how it is. Feel as much anger as you like. The moment you decided to take the lives of my friend, everything was already decided. Bark about it as much as you like because once you’ve been turn into a corpse, you can no longer do it.”

Under the moonlit sky, black and blue auras opposed one another, however the Demonic Flower Spirit seems to be losing in beauty. Maybe that’s a touchy topic.

As the two face off with each other, the clouds hide the moon behind it, the wind blows and fear can be sensed within the wind spirits. Having the chance, Georudo is now joins the fierce battle between the two.

“You are sluggish Rafflesia! I’ll kill her with my spear!”

“Stay out of this Geo. Don’t spoil my fun.”

Georudo became impatient and runs into the battle from the left of Diadora on four legs dyed with dried blood. In his right hand, he holds his spear, pointing it at Diadora’s chest.

“I’ll clear up this mess.”

Though Diadora doesn’t turn down the challenge from Georudo, I have a feeling that it will be extremely difficult for her to attain victory against these two. Rafflesia then kicks off the ground, she’s wearing red shoes, demonstrating an amazing speed despite having an appearance of a little girl advancing faster than Georudo and heading straight for Diadora.

“Die!!!”

“It’s my kill!”

Zawa(*rustle*). Diadora once again creates a sea of countless thorny whips to counter the enemies. However just before the charging Rafflesia and Georudo collide with the thorns, a powerful shockwave mercilessly strike between them.

“Nuo?!”

“Not again! Is it another Devil? Kyaaa…~~”

As for Georudo, his spear was blocked by the shockwave and he came to a complete stop. Rafflesia on the other hand sustained no injury but suffered a slight shock from the energy blast, her blue fog absorbed the power of the impact. The blue fog was big, but Rafflesia was not able to prevent the energy bolt which was carefully aimed at her vitals, and avoid Diadora’s thorns at the same time.

I notice the Wood Elves a fair distance behind Diadora using magic to bind Georudo. Diadora then turns towards us, in her eyes reflect Dran’s appearance. Dran and I understood how dire the situation was with Diadora and rushed here from the southwest area using large scale magic in succession. A brief moment later, Diadora’s gaze meets Dran’s.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 9]

-The Four Vanguards from Hell-

I let out a small sigh of relief, knowing I was able to save Diadora from danger. The Demonic Flower Spirit who directly took my bolt of energy is motionless on the ground.

Although it should not have been a fatal wound, surely a few dozen cushioned blows got through.

Rafflesia's small body lies in the dirt, there is also an unknown shadow flitting over the location where I shot the magic.

The beautiful shadow dashes swiftly through the air.

Oh, it is only Christina, grasping her beloved sword.

Magic is being used to manipulate the air and create small vortexes of wind, compressing them into an area big enough to have a sturdy foot hold; the technique is simultaneously being used to accelerate her body.

Christina fearlessly jumps in front of Georudo.

"Let's go, Erusupadas!"

Christina calls out the name of her sword, firmly gripping it, transferring magic from the Akira Spirit stone into the magical seal carved onto Erusupadas.

Bunn~

A subtle sound is caused by pale light wrapping around the sword, from the hilt to the tip of the blade, ringing out. In addition to the common weight reduction and hardening magic, magic such as slash empowerment and body reinforcement were also triggered.

"Nuu, such impudence!"

The spear Georudo aimed at Diadora was blown away by my magic and its tip is buried in the ground. Without his spear, Georudo transforms his left arm into a circular shield and tries to crush Christina.

The sound of the clash is dreadful, Christina's small figure is tiny compared to Georudo's; it's like seeing a glimpse of beauty confront a lump of flesh. Christina must have completely understood how the Wood Elves felt, fighting Georudo is inevitable, it is only right to fight against such evil.

"FU!"

Christina inhales sharply, evading Georudo's shield by a shockingly close distance. Christina avoids the blow by ducking her body to her right, grasping a foothold on the ground,

changing her direction using wind magic and jumps over Georudo's lower body aiming for his neck at the speed of a meteor.

There is nothing obstructing Christina and she strikes Georudo's neck beautifully; the blade, Erusupadas, is embedded deep inside Georudo's body. (T.L. A slash cut into the body and end up at the neck?)

After taking the blow, Georudo's appearance seems to be enduring it, however there is no mistake that a gasp of agony leaks from his helmet.

"*Guooo, how!?* How is a mere Human able to wound me!?"

Christina yanks Erusupadas out of Georudo's shoulder and kicks off, creating some distance. Where the sword was pulled out, black blood rapidly oozes out, flowing down Georudo's body. Christina cuts through the air like a dragonfly and lands elegantly, while Georudo covers his wound with his left hand and gives her a glare brimming with hatred.

Even an experienced Hero would cower when met with that gaze, however, Christina holds Erusupadas with both hands and points her blade toward the enemy; there is no sign of her budging.

The reason which drives Christina's courage, I wonder what it is?

"Ahh!! I'll tear you into tens of thousands of pieces!!"

With flames of hatred burning in his eyes, Georudo roars like a beast while yellow saliva drips down his body. Pierced by spears, squashed by his shield, tearing out limbs, chewing up and spitting out into a thousand pieces. To cause eternal pain, as long as one lives, are what Georudo's eyes are saying.

Selia, who has finally arrived, was shielded from Georudo's gaze by Christina. Then Selia's body begins to clad an extremely aggressive dark red aura, with her golden hair blowing in the wind. The form of the cursed snake, dwelling in her blood and soul, starts to manifest itself. Without potent Magical sight, an average magician wouldn't be able to resist the magic, becoming paralyzed.

"The serpent that is bound to my soul, devour my grief and hatred, the seven headed serpent who holds the power to bring forth calamity, Jaramu Dyuaramu!!"

The snake which appears by Selia's aria is unlike anything I've seen up until now, the chant creates a huge snake with seven heads resembling that of a Hydra. The seven heads connected to one body reach out and wind around Georudo's four legs, two arms, and neck, strangling him with a steel-like grip.

"Eei, are you planning to hinderance me again!?"

Selia skillfully jumps down from the wall, facing Georudo and have her back turns against from Diadora to protect her, she calls out to me, standing on top of the wall, without hesitation.

“Dran-san, please help!”

“Fumu.”

While Georudo is struggling, I take the opportunity to shoot a magic spell, choosing a chant which rolls off the tongue. Speaking the words of power, the magic I’m trying to invoke begins. However, the moment I am about to fire, an enormous object was thrown at at me over a great distance at an incredible speed.

Intensely spinning, the axe flies through the air towards me, and cuts through the air with a slicing sound. The object being thrown at me is is troublesome. I change the target of my magic to the approaching axe and deflect it; while I find it annoying, I praise the enemy at the same time.

“They don’t intend to let their ally fall.「Cosmic Ignition!」”

Numerous red lights gather in my left hand, like a group of stars, I continue compress them into a scorching spear, hot enough to melt steel. The plan was to finish off Georudo, who was wounded by Christina, but it can’t be helped.

I throw the blazing spear at the incoming axe and it leaves behind a flaming trail. I watch as the blazing orange spear clashes with the huge axe in the air. The moment「Cosmic Ignition」violently collides with the axe, flame bursts out in every direction, briefly following, hot wind brushes against my cheek and hair.

The huge axe spins away in the air, leaving a trail of fire in the air, as if a flower was blooming in the sky; it finally crashes into the ground with a violent explosion. Looking at the axe, I can only estimate it’s weight is equal to five Humans. While I watch the black smoke come off of the axe, Georudo’s body suddenly fills with great magical power and strength, to the point of tearing free from the seven headed serpent wrap.

“NUAAHHHHHHHH!!”

“Kyaa!”

In an instant, Georudo shreds two serpent heads to a thousand pieces, as they fade, the atmosphere fills with bitterness as Georudo’s glare is filled with a burning grudge. After Georudo displays his strength, Selia let out a small scream.

At least, the snake is now in a better place now. However, Georudo’s comrade has given him a narrow escape from death. Either we possess bad luck or he is blessed with the devil’s luck.

“Georudo, do you and Rafflesia have an excuse for looking like that?”

Georudo is asked by a knight with a huge body dressed in armor, who picks up the axe, which still has black smoke coming off of it. In contrast to Georudo, who has blood covering his body, the knight dressed in black armor and his head is cloaked in darkness. This knight is around three or four times my height, he is definitely not Human and can only be called a giant.

That axe and armour must have been forged from ore, instead of being transforming from their immense body. The overbearing image created by that massive figure gives off a strong pressure, like a mountain on a completely different level compared to Georudo. Being asked that question by the one who saved his life, Georudo doesn't say anything in defense.

"This is an event that happens once every hundred years or so. Anyhow, I'm called Geren. Just by looking at the scene I can already guess what happened. Oh! I'm also Georudo and Rafflesia's colleague.

You there, female Human, daughter of the Lamia race, and the man standing over there, hand Black Rose over to Georudo and Rafflesia. That is what our master desires. Will you comply?"

Christina and Selia put themselves on guard in response to Geren's words. If Geren's target is Diadora then we just need to keep her out of his reach, I ready my posture to prepare for the fight that can break out at any moment, as Rafflesia regains conscious and stands up attempting to grasp the situation. There will be no room for Diadora to offer support when Christina takes on Geren. Christina lowers her blade which is emitting bluish white color, Erusupadas, to the right; taking a breath, she then aims for Geren to attain victory. (T.L. No room for Diodora because she'll be fighting Rafflesia.)

Despite the touki* being emitted from Geren, Christina doesn't falter and charges in front of him. The miasma that a being from Hell shoots out is equivalent to poison to the people living in this world. The poison will eat away the mind and flesh, eventually corroding the soul away. (T.L. Touki is fighting spirit.)

Selia who inherited the cursed snakes power in mind, body, and soul possesses a degree of tolerance; it's amazing Christina can fight without breaking out into a cold sweat.

Just, what on earth did she experience in her life. What did she do to possess so much courage as a female human.

"Selia, cover me!"

"Hai, please leave it to me!"

"Hahaha, excellent, child of the living. Showing mercy to women and children, does not exist in Hell."

"What a coincidence. I don't like showing mercy either!"

"That spirit is excellent.Yosh, then you should wield that blade to your hearts content. With that in mind, I shall smash it into pieces!"

Geren, accepts the challenge and charges at Christina with earth shattering strength. With his body frame and weight extremely outclassing a humans, his running speed is far superior, every steps he takes contain so much force that the ground resonates with sounds like an earthquake. When comparing that heavy pressure to Christina's, it is like pitting a kitten against a savage beast. Even though Christina is the one who should be affected by it the most, there isn't the slightest sign of fear showing on her beautiful face.

“Lets start with a warm-up, try not to die little girl!”

Geren raises his axe and swings it straight down at Christina, like a jet black avalanche, using his right hand. Just as he declared, the blow had enough power to blow away ten to twenty men.

In that situation, Christina moves to block the incoming axe from above, by clashing Erusupadas against it. Christina’s strength far transcends an ordinary Human, but against Geren in a test of strength, she is at a clear disadvantage; it seems that Geren knows it as well judging from his expression showing through the gap of his helmet.

Christina also seems to be aware of the fact, so instead of blocking it head on, she shifts Erusupadas slightly and deflects the axe to the side. There was so much force put into Geren’s swing that when it hit the ground on Christina’s left side, it creates a fissure in the ground. A huge scar was created on the ground, and the shock of the impact reminds me of a thunderbolt hitting the earth and spreading out in every direction.

I can feel the vibration even where I’m standing, it is a wonder how Christina is retaining her balance. However, no matter how much force was deflected, Christina did block the Devil’s attack with both hands holding Erusupadas, Christina grinds her teeth while bearing the pressure.

“Yoshi Yoshi, you pass.”

From the corner of her eyes, Christina lets out a feeling of pride in response to Geren’s words, and then she boldly runs toward Geren’s feet. In the same way as she ran through the air, by generating wind on the back of her feet as a scaffold, she can reach a speed to overtake the wind itself. The moonlight reflecting off of Christina’s silver hair leaves behind a silver trail as she moves out of Geren’s line of sight, under his body. Geren steps back and thrusts his left hand down towards her. Geren’s left hand is reminiscent of the siege weapons used to break down a castle’s gates, Christina jumps to dodge the arm that’s crashing down towards her at a frightening speed, moreover, she jumps onto his arm and runs up it, aiming for his head.

Not sure if I should I admire her courage or be amazed at that recklessness.

After Christina dodges his attack and runs up his left arm, Geren lets out a joyful murmur, releasing the axe in his right hand, planning to crush her with it. The light armor Christina is wearing won’t be able to consolidate against Geren’s attack. It’s instant death if that blow were to hit, that much is certain.

“Spirit of the Earth, please stop that person’s movement!”

Selia calls out to the Earth Spirit and interferes with the ground where Geren is standing, hindering his balance.

“Mu..”

Geren's gigantic lower body begins to sink into the ground, to stop it, he moves his right hand to the side, keeping himself atop. Selia stopped Geren's movement for a short time, furthermore, she plans to land a blow on the black knight.

"「Energy Bolt!」"

With his right arm occupied and his movement restricted, four arrows made of pure energy hit his head in quick succession. Geren's big cylinder shaped helmet receives a great shock, and while this is happening, Christina has finished climbing up to the shoulder joint.

"I have him!"

Pulling Erusupadas from behind, Christina pours the power of her heart and soul into it. The sword flashes in the moonlight, it was certain that it got Geren's neck. However, Geren's right hand remains stationary, he jerked his shoulder and avoids the attack, then he pushes off the ground with his hands and anchors himself. Christina, who was standing on his left shoulder, is thrown into the air, as Geren lashes out while upside down. (T.L. Imagine an upside down handstand kick. I'm not into martial art so I have no clue what else to tell ya.)

"Haha, did you think I was a blockhead?"

Geren says light-heartedly to Christina as she twists her body in the night sky and prepares her landing like a cat; as she is doing that, his left leg comes through the air. Geren's leg arcs toward Christina.

It is easy to imagine Christina's body being blown away like dirt by Geren. Geren generates the momentum of the kick by digging his right hand into the ground! The sound of his knee coming down is solemn.

"Che!"

However Christina, who was supposed to be blown away, is clinging to Geren's left foot. As Geren's foot closed in, Christina positioned Erusupadas in front of the kick, cutting into Geren's foot, reducing the force and avoiding a direct hit. Christina's enigmatic acrobatic performance is difficult to comprehend.

After that mistake, Christina nerves must have been shaved off, because a cold sweat starts to shine on her pale face.

"Good grief, your spirit has grown cold!"

Geren tries to crush her by slamming his leg down but Christina removes Erusupadas and jumps away simultaneously. Geren lowers his right hand close to the earth, making a hmph sound as he does, and grab the axe which was dropped onto the ground. Although black blood, the same as Georudo's, is coming out of the wound on his left foot, he doesn't seem to be in pain. He seems to be rather comfortable with it.

"Christina-san! Help her, Jaramu!"

As Christina makes her landing, Selia retriggers the spell which summoned Jaramu, increasing the force; she tries to keep Geren occupied so Christina can gain some distance. It is noteworthy that the caster invoking this technique can sense the position of magic.. The technique can reveal nearby enemies by showing the spirits vision, up to a certain distance. At the same time, Selia is making the spirit serpent coil and tighten around Geren's body with a bone breaking force, but Geren is unfazed.

"Ha ha, this is rather comfortable. The Devil snake that lived in Hell can't come close to this degree, so this is the cursed snake that was inherited by the girl."

The snake heads start to spit a poison-like mixture in Geren's face but he simple swing his axe and obliterates the snake's form. The white bones, red meat, and eyeballs of the snake scatter everywhere, and the snake dissolves into the atmosphere, the bindings on Geren's body are gone. Geren tilts his neck left and right, the sound of his bones cracking is very loud. It is like the sound of breaking trees. Geren's focuses his eyes now, looking down on Christina.

"Your overall physical strength was reinforced by magic to a certain degree. Evidently, your mind and body seems to be in rather excellent condition despite being surrounded by my touki. You, are you of the Superrace?"

"Superrace? I don't know the full detail oh what you're talking about, but I'm sure we would enjoy discussing it."

With a fearless smile of her beautiful face, Christina replies to Geren full of sarcasm; Geren doesn't seem to be mad about it.. His loud voice shakes the surroundings as he bursts out laughing.

"Fuahahahaha, the amount of guts you possess, I like it more and more. Now lets see, it is about time for both of us to get serious."

"Selia, do not relax your guard."

"H-Hai. Christina-san, please be careful. He is not an ordinary opponent."

Christina murmurs something very quietly.

She's making a sour face, like eating a hundred insects . However, she seems to be enjoying herself if I'm not mistaken. Christina doesn't realize what kind of existence I am, this shaved soul also enjoyed fighting in countless battles, I will surely enjoy the upcoming battle as well.

♦ ♦ ♦

Gio and Fio arrive at the northern wall after Dran, and witness that blood has been drawn earlier in Christina and Selia's battle against Geren. There is no reason for the outsiders to press the battle upon themselves, especially not against that Geren when there are demonic soldiers ready to swarm the wall again and need to be repelled. Once Gio's comrades arrive at the northern wall, Gio and them draw their bows, ready their magic, and set their sights on the Devils.

“Onii-san, do we need to give Dran-san support?”

“It is regrettable, but that battle isn’t a fight we can interfere with. We will do the things we can do. Fio, you should call out your spirits too.”

“I understand. Marl, you too.”

“Marl will stay here, too. -ni Marl may be tiny, doesn’t have much power, but Spirit-san will help if help is requested. -ni”

Hearing Marl’s determination on her shoulder, Fio wiggles her long ears, which resemble bamboo leaves, and nods with her head. Already, the elder brother released his arrow along with his comrades onto the demonic soldiers.

“Come Marl. Spirit of the Wind.”

“Hai, Wind Spirit-san, please hear Marl’s voice.”

“Become the blade that cuts through our enemy!”

On top of the wall, not only Fio and Marl, but the Wood Elves also cast spells which create violent wind blades sharp enough to tear through the Zeruto, who are trying to breach the wall; their sharp talons could not save them. When the Zeruto, with a lizard like face and thin arms, climbed up the wall they were cut cleanly in half and fell down helplessly to the ground. It is not an exaggeration to say that Gio is an expert marksman and he is always hitting the bull’s-eye(infallible), further more, his arrows were strengthened using magic so as he continued shooting, they all found their marks and the devils burst into ashes one by one.

The great thorny spear that was used against Georudo and Rafflesia, created an obstacle the incoming devils had to go through in order to breach the village wall. The demonic soldiers are also avoiding Geren and Georudo’s battle field as well, so their detour is even longer. Gio leaving the commander of the Devil army to Dran and Diadora, while he and his comrade deal with the common devils. Fio was entrusted with the job of leading other Wood Elves and defended the northern wall, but her voice trembled whenever she spoke. Those Wood Elves are seniors and are at least a hundred years older than Gio. Their whole bodies are covering in small wounds and the smell of blood being carried through the air, moreover, they all show sign of fatigue. Diadora was here to fight at the northern region where everyone was anxious to go, because it is a large concentration of devils.

“Eshutaru, you are safe.”

“Gio, the fact remains that I want to know more about those Humans, but right now is not the time.”

“Yes. We have entrusted Dekabutsu the task of holding back the invader. So now that the southern region is holding up, what about the east and west?”

“In the east, Oliver had successfully repelled the devils. There wasn’t any problem mentioning it in the report. As for the west, they are managing somehow, but it seems like

the devils from there are mobilizing over here. It would be very bad if the commanders[those big guys] come out on top."

"Is that so? I understand. The village chief will gather/assemble everyone here, we must defend this place at all cost/till the end."

"Understood. In that case, I will smash the devils coming over from the west."

"Affirmative. Let this crisis fade away, like the wind brushing through the forest."(T.L. I think they means the forest will recover and thrive and try to cover up the past.)

In response to words of prayer for the safety spoken in the people of the forest's manner, Eshutaru reorganizes his subordinates who were notching arrows to shoot at the demonic soldiers, turns his back on Gio and runs off.

It is because Dran and the others are suppressing Georudo and Geren, it was possible to disperse the forces, but if they did not come into the forest of Ente today, and if they did not offer to help, and we did not happen to stumble upon them by chance, then it would not be possible to get help from anywhere—.

"This place, which has suffer many sacrifice. This is [shall be] the divine protection Yggdrasil shall grants."

Murmuring the Tree of Creation's name, which the Elves believe in, Gio noch a new arrow. The Wood Elves in general are expert archers, in their hands the bow would fire the arrow with deadly accuracy, as if there were some kind of thread connecting the arrow to its target. While the Wood Elves fight to keep the devils off the wall, Rafflesia, who was laying on the ground, finally stands up; the life-absorbing blue fog gushes out of her body. In Rafflesia's eyes, hatred has been compressed over and over, to the point where insanity seems to have materialized.

Rafflesia turns away from Diadora, whose right cheek has a vermilion line(scratch?) of blood flowing down and looks at Dran who is confronting Georudo. After observing Dran and Georudo intensely for a few moments, she refocuses her eyes on Diadora. Suddenly, Rafflesia's firm flower like lips twist. Rafflesia's smile is the shape of a crescent moon. A smile that harbors a cold sensation and a tinge of madness, capable of deceiving a person's heart.

"Hey, where would you like me to start breaking you? Shall I dry your arms and expose your bones? Or should I absorb your feet and crush them into sand? Maybe I should dry your whole body out until it withers away and dies, leaving behind only your pretty head? So, which do you prefer? Hello?"

Diadora, who was listening to the words of Rafflesia, which could shake a person's soul in fear after hearing it, stands up under the moonlight, an antithesis to Rafflesia; she looks very charming and has a glossy smile. Then, she raises her right index finger to trace the scratch on her cheek, which anyone in the world would be furious wondering who dared leave such a mark there. Her arms sway with grace, like a brush dancing on top of paper, and in an elegant manner, she replies.

“I’m *thankful* for the offer. To express my *gratitude*, I’ll rearrange your face and make it more *beautiful*. If there’s a person who needs to be shredded, that would be you.”

In an instant, blue fog gushes from Rafflesia’s body explosively in every direction after she heard Diadora’s mocking voice. Rafflesia’s explosive emotions seems to have reached a limit. Diadora’s words seem to have become the sharpest blade in the world, Rafflesia’s pride is cut off and thrown away.

“I do not need that, AHAHA!!!! Oh Oh OH!!! I’ll make you feel regret, wishing that you never put a scratch on me.”

“You unattractive Demonic Flower. I’ll make you regret you’ve ever set foot inside this forest!”

♦ ♦ ♦

I hold an anxiety toward the devil army’s movement as we fight against Georudo and the others, but the Wood Elves however, are taking a glance at our fight every so often as they continue to keep the devils at bay. If they can cope with the devil’s attack, it won’t be a problem leaving it to them. While the battle at the wall intensify, so does the battle between Christina and Geren, Georudo also increases his violent nature—

“Guuu, *Eei!* I will clear the disgrace which has been brought upon my spear and I. Human, this resolution will be achieved by my hand.”

Georudo points his spear at me with an incredible force, setting me as the first sacrifice. A strong wind arise and brushes against my black hair. With red color touki emitting from his body, Georudo is beyond reason.

“Such a weak resolution. You can’t clear your disgrace with just that.”

While hold my long sword in one hand, I jump off the wall and land. Manipulating the wind to support me during the fall, the landing is relatively safe. Georudo heard my words, feeling mocked, starting to spit out fiery breath down to his beast lower body.

Breathing out fire to only this degree is just a simple trick.

“You human trash, it appears that you do not know your place. I will give you a good lesson in exchange for your life.”

“Hou, what kind of lesson?”

“Your loose mouth is shortening your life span!”

After declaring so, Georudo kicks against the ground and [flies] toward me. Georudo charges on all four legs leaving traces of red touki in his path. In a blink of an eye, Georudo’s huge figure fully covers my sight.

“It is just a regular lesson, there is some truth to it.”

I grip onto my sword tightly and receive Georudo, whose neck is still spilling out black blood from his open wound. I focus my attention on the tip of the spear rather than Georudo's massive body. No matter what kind of heavy armor is worn, this spear will pierce through them like paper, but my mind is calm, free of fear. I bring my sword down and touch the tip of the spear, that is being mercilessly thrust, softly through the air. I overlayed my eyes with that I once had, from the memory that was recorded in my Dragon soul, along with the nerves reflex. The moment the sword touches the spear, the magic which I apply on the sword beforehand activates. (T.L. TRAP card activates!!)

"*Don!*"

The thundering sound rings across the vicinity three times in quick succession, a suitable sound of our weapon clashing, Georudo's large spear is repelled. Not only that, I also deflect it toward his right side, successfully breaking his center of gravity, despite him having four legs. The technique which I used are generally call Magic Sword. It is a type of improvisational magic that is exercised on weapons, with the intent of activating the input of magic at a certain condition.

Just now, the magic which I applied on to the sword was a lower class magic which was set to generate shock waves of pure energy at a very close(point-blank) range to the wielder. I loaded enough energy for three uses into the sword and it worked out beautifully, deflecting Georudo's spear. Georudo's figure is completely exposed, unguarded in front of me. Anger and hatred burns in Georudo's eyes for making a stupid mistake against me.

"There's an opening."

At a time like this, I speak mercilessly, unlike my speech toward my past acquaintances. Reverting my sword, I judge the distance of sword will reach and slash it upwards, from the left toward Georudo's beast-like head. From the beginning, I wanted to avoid using Dragon class power in front of the others, including Christina and Selia, but facing this kind of opponent with Human ability is unwise. When the sword starts to give off a white light because of the magical power imbued within, I slash it from the earth towards the sky, the crescent light slash moves through Georudo's body, intending to sever his body in two.

However, Georudo tilts his head to the right, the action leaves him with a deep wound in his neck but increases the amount of meat and bones my sword has to cut through, stopping my empowered slash. In an instant, black blood flows out of the wound I caused and moments after, it pours all over Georudo's body. Georudo stumbles three or four steps backwards like a wounded beast; his blood is flowing like a waterfall and yellow saliva spills from his mouth. The distance between me and Georudo is approximately fifteenth steps. But the distance can be covered in a blink of an eye. When I am about to deliver another blow, I hear loud voice reminiscence strong wind blowing off tree roots coming at me.

"Eei, HALT!!"

Then, the thought of the fourth Devil commander float into my mind. So far, the fourth commander did not make a rash move, finally they get up and start mobilizing their massive bulk. As I am about to give pursuit, a huge shadow looms over Georudo. The moment the shadow overlaps my own shadow, it attacks me and the sensation feels as if their entire weight is put into the attack. Upon landing on the ground, the figures impact makes a loud

sound, lots of power is transmitted into the ground. Apparently, the fourth commander's power surpasses the other three, or so it seems.

Everyone on the battlefield, both people of this world and from Hell, look upon this. Thus, they see. A humanoid person wearing white phosphorescent armor in the darkness of the night under the brilliant moon light. The humanoid person has already jumped between Georudo and me. With overwhelming stress placed upon the ground, standing in a daunting stance, his feet sink into the ground, up to his ankles. Similar to Georudo and Geren's body, which must have been triple or quadruple my own, the violent touki being emitted from that body is quite dense.

Nevertheless, that touki is troublesome. It's quality and effect also seem to differ from Georudo and Rafflesia. Bloodthirst and touki gush from the white knight, it is filled with gruesomeness and cruelty, pain and agony, disgrace and humiliation, all of which can be associated with death, and once one gazes upon the white knight, clad in his touki, a revelation of death and suffering will come upon them. The feeling's… that of soldier, exhausting all of his energy on a conflict without end and finally meeting his demise. There is no sign of evil, just pure struggle.

The white knight wrapped his entire body in outstanding white and sharp looking armor, curved horns extend out from both sides of his helmet, on top of his helmet, there are slits that resemble gills stretching all the way to the back of his helmet. There are four, tightly packed together, arms connected to his body like enormous rocks rather than logs. Hanging on his left waist is a gigantic long sword and in his left arm, he hold a shield that can easily be misunderstood for a round table. Also, I get a glimpse of two additional swords strapped across his back.

Three swords and a shield, the white knights fighting style is going to involve using those.

"Georg, this is my fight!!"

Georudo calls out to Georg in protest, but there is no power in his voice. It probably has something to do with his current appearance, but Georg will rule that out for him. Even without fighting, by appearance alone, Georg shows that he is superior to Georudo, Rafflesia, and Geren, everyone on this battlefield understands this, including me.

"I must apologize for interceding, this fight looks too one-sided to continue. I'm sorry!"

The apology is for Georudo from Georg. It is very awkward having to receive an honest apology from a Devil like this, it seems to be the same for both sides, Georudo looks daunted facing his superior.

"Muu, eei this is very awkward and difficult."

"By the way, move aside, Human. There, Spirit of the Black Rose."

Georg's eyes shine with a golden color and gaze pass me, then pass Christina and Geren's fight, stopping on Diadora, glee shows from the bottom of his heart. Georudo and Rafflesia's nature, finding enjoyment from taking away life, seems to be one of the many distinctive

traits of Devils. However, that does not change the fact that Devils and the creatures from Hell will never permit other living creatures to survive on this world.

“I take it you did not come here to make the situation more *pleasant*, Devil.”

“Fu, against such an opponent, there isn’t a need to use military oppression, but rather reason. Against those who are not only unfazed by our appearance, but to go to an extent of wounding us in a fight, it is only true. It has indeed been a long time since we last encountered a strong person living in this world.”

“In that case, fully savor the taste, Devil countrymen.”

“Hahahahawaa! Treating an Evil God or a Demon Lord’s subordinates like they are worms wiggling in the rural area in Hell, this Human’s tongue is quite skilled!!”

In my previous life, there was an influential Goddess who considered Evil Gods and Demon Lords her friends, but to me, the lot and their foundations in Hell, are enemies. Georg’s laughter continues without change, seeing him clad in touki and now wielding three swords in three arms, I watch carefully and once again, ready my sword.

Swords of tremendous magnitude that can slice a house into two, I wonder what they are called.

“Georg, you, thieving bastard!!”

“What, I’m just going to play for a little.”

“Bastard, you always end up slicing up the opponent, you will probably do the same this time.”

Looking at Georudo and Georg exchanging, for my own convenience in this situation, I loose my mouth instinctively.

“This is regrettable but consider the opportunity fair.”

I dig my boots into the ground until it get to my ankle, charge explosively forward to clash against Georg with my sword. It is certain that Georg can take three people head simultaneously, but that is not enough to frighten me. Just like my declaration, I called every devils here countrymen, at the very least, some irritation and anger must have built up in their guts.

“Hou, not so fast, Human.”

Georg says in a joyful voice and swings down the sword in his lower right arm. From the handle grip to the tip of his sword, Georg covers it with his touki, which effectively increases the weapon’s strength and sharpness by several folds. The blow contains enough force and power to cut through a lower class Dragon’s scales, meat, bones and deprive it of its intelligent; with my past living experience, I guarantee it.

“My name is Dran, remember it!”

I meet Georg's sword coming down with my own sword head on. Having already resupplied the spent energy in the sword, used in the clash with Georudo's spear, Georg's sword is deflected away with the the tremendous impact sound. The result is the same with Georudo, however as I reexamine what just happened, I too received recoil and my sword rebounds slightly, unlike earlier.

Fumu, labeling him as the Supreme commander was not a mistake.

"Dran, I'll be sure to remember the name. A name that no human in this world will ever have a connection with!"

Some will. Probably.

Georg's lower right hand is deflected to the right, however he swings down his upper arms, holding a sword in each hand, simultaneously. Putting even more power than the first blow, the consecutive attack speed and power pressure is like crashing thunder. The wind pressure from the white empowered slashes that could scatter a human's body to bits, come at me in white lines.

Nevertheless, since Christina and Selia are focusing their attention on fighting against Geren, I think it is safe for me to loosen the shackles I had imposed upon myself to a certain degree. The attacks aim to cut off both of my shoulders joints—if one of them gets through, it would prove to be fatal—in order to avoid that, it is best to mow him down using my sword. This time however, no playing with Energy impact. I draw out the power from my Dragon soul and clad my sword with it. If someone possessing a magical sight near God level were to observe this, they would see a vision of my sword covered in a White Dragon's claw.

"Oh, is this, by any chance…"

Sensing the new power that I brought out to counter his empowered slashes, his face is filled with surprise.

However, do you have the leisure to be surprised at this, Devil?

I turn my body sideways, avoiding his attack while at the same time, keeping my sword close to my body and thrust it into the right side of the opponent.

"*Guo.*"

I let out a sound that my human vocal cords are not supposed to make, out from my throat. It is a sound that could be mistaken for a growl from the Dragon race. I pierce Georg with the attack, containing much more power than the one against Georudo; however, he receives it with the shield on his lower left arm.

"Muo!?"

The tip of the sword was supposed to go through the center of Georg's round shield, however, he skillfully pours power into his arm and deflect it to his outer left hand side. It is the same method Christina used to divert Geren's axe earlier. However, the cost of diverting my attack

isn't cheap. While the sword is still stuck inside Georg's shield, I re-grip it with both hands, take in a short breath and shake it from side to side, pulling it free.

Georg's body shakes left and right, barely bracing himself as shock and astonishment of what I did wells up in his eyes. The amount of power I just showed is roughly equal to one-tenth of my current power, that much is enough to cause even a high Devil commander and veteran who have experienced many battles like Georg to be astonished.

When my sword is completely free from the shield, Georg's three arms with a sword in each one come down at me with minimal effort. The three swords do not have a lot of power and speed in them and barely graze my skin as I use my sword to repel them all with one hit.

Georg pulls his swords back immediately and attacks me in quick succession, putting his shield in front for defensive purposes. The power being demonstrated by Georg is a feat that no human with peak physical prowess and cardiopulmonary ability can achieve, this is further proven when looking at this Devil knight showing off his military's training experience.

For this reason, as I continue to fight off his swords, the colour of wonder and admiration thicken in Georg's eyes. As the sound of clashing swords continue to ring like music on the battlefield, the three swords come down ontop of me, I deflect all of them upward, forcefully creating an opening.

"「Explosion!」"

The Dragon class magical power forms between Georg and me, then an explosive phenomenon occurs and Georg's entire body is wrapped in it. Georg's big body is blown away by the dazzling light while covered in black smoke, as he falls onto the ground, there are several places on his armor where black smoke is being given off. Seeing Georg's previously shining appearance now shrouded in black smoke fumes, I slightly click my tongue.

"Tsk-tsk."

Georg protected his body by pushing his shield and swords in front to guard against the attack and avoid taking a direct hit from the explosion.

"Uumu, I'm genuinely surprised about this, Dran."

"Is there hardly any pain or even an itch? I thought it would do a little more damage."

I reaffirm my sword, as Georg stands up and raises his upper hands, he slowly sheaths his sword in his lower right hand back into its scabbard, I carefully consider the situation. I suspect it might be some kind of technique but his action doesn't seem to be out of the ordinary. I simply discard my suspicion.

"Wait a moment. Today's battle has filled me with excitement, however, I do not intend to end it here with a black and white outcome. Shall we stop it here for now?"

"Even if you say so now, I did not see such a suggestion coming. Considering the alternative choice is to fight until we die…"

“There is no rush. It is something I desire after all. Everything has an order.”

After a brief moment, I lower the tip of my sword, in agreement to stop the fight here, Georg also sheaths his two sword he is holding onto with his two upper arms, and in the next moment, to finish things off, in an eardrum tearing voice, he declared loudly.

“Hear me, people of the forest! You can continue exhausting your life against us, or you can join us at the gate of our camp and preserve your life, but if you find another road to walk on beside these two, it is good too.

Three days from now, we will march back to this village with our entire army. Discuss about it to your heart content, and decide your future.

You too human, whose exceptional strength was borrowed to oppose us, the offer applies to you as well, you would prove to be an excellent addition to our ranks.”

Georg’s announcement roar around the area like thunder and reach everyone even the Wood elves inside the wall.

“Fumu, it seems the only path is to oppose you. Whether or not you will sincerely wait for three days, I guess we will have to wait for three days and see.”

Georg must have let out a small grin inside his helmet after hearing my words.

“Fufufu, a reply full of spirit biting back at my own words, as expected of such an opponent. To equally live and constantly experience battle. Decide to fight and see how one’s life turns about.

To be selected to fight, it is one of the few freedoms permitted in life. Do as you like. Georudo, Geren, Rafflesia, that is enough for tonight. Retreat!”

The decision seems too quick, but Georg has already turned away from me and is marching to the northern region. I was thinking, what if they would attack as we turn our backs, and maybe we should attack them while they have their backs against us, but that would be problematic. This fellow from Hell has a firm character and both parties should abide by the agreement. Besides, if someone were to attack Georg from behind, he would have sliced them in a flash of white lines with his three swords.

“Umu. I wonder if we’ll fight again, in such a place.”

Geren murmurs to himself and retreats, obediently following Georg’s order. After he said that, he rests his axe on his shoulder and quickly dashes away. The speed at which all this happens is rather amazing.

“Spirit of the Back Rose, humans, the disgrace and humiliation I’ve received tonight will not forgotten. I will fill my belly with your meat, and moisten my throat with your blood, and rinse away the humiliation I’ve received with your screams!”

While black blood continues oozing out of the wound on his neck and flowing down onto his body that is both evil and unfortunate; Georudo is looks weakened but is still glaring at

Diadora, Christina, and the at me with eyes blazing with so much hatred, to the point that it has almost unbelievable. While watching Georg and I fought, Georudo's emotions must have gone amok, but he obediently follows Georg away.

Diadora quietly draws near me— Rafflesia who just stopped fighting her jumps on Georudo's left shoulder and gives both Diadora and I a dirty look. With hatred, by no mean inferior to Georudo's, in her eyes. Her hatred would not fade away, even if a hundred or even a thousand years pass. With a clearly sadistic smile floating on her face, Rafflesia speaks up.

"Wa~ I will come back and kill all of you without fail. Geo failed to kill you, huh? I will make you weep and *beg* me to kill you out of mercy."

I turn my back against the Devils retreating after Georg after I see that they are keeping their word and not chasing after us without warning. Their movements head north. That must be where the gate connecting Hell and this world is located. Ultimately, that place is our objective. The Wood Elves form a line on top of the wall with Gio commanding them, as they watch the Devils retreat after Georg. Lacking a means to commence an immediate counter attack, they silently watch as their enemies retreat, Gio understand this the best.

"Fumu, it is safe temporarily, let's assess the situation. Selia, Christina-san and Diadora, are all of you alright? No one sustained any severe injury?"

I turn back and ask, Selia and Christina both give me a nod, which left just Diadora giving me a look full of suspicion.

"I came here as an ally. My name is Dran."

"… Though it seems you've already known my name, I'll say it directly. Diadora."

Humans participating in this supernatural war, Diadora doesn't seem to be convinced of that just yet, the situation is still not clearly realized. Fio and Marl quickly fill Diadora in on what is going on, then she finally understands. I let out my favorite phrase, *Fumu*, as the last figure of the devils go out of sight.

"Now then, the enemy is more troublesome than I thought, so what is the plan for fighting against them, forest dweller."

According to Georg, they will only have a grace period of three days before the next attack. They can either attack, or yield to the enemy. We will provide support, but what will they do?

I think to myself, and soon, we are lead by Gio and Fio along with other Wood Elves into the village. The village is located in the far western side of Ente, and we are heading over to the west side of the village. It is already well into the night, moonlight leaks through the tree branches, on the ground there is luminous moss, and also luminous bugs serving as a light source in the night.(T.L. Feeling like the world of Pandora in the movie Avatar.)

There are houses inside trees, or they could be called cavities inside giant trees. As we walk, the feeling of battle still lingers in atmosphere, Gio guides us as he explains, originally there were no Humans inside the forest so at the sight of my appearance, some Wood Elves would give me a look of disbelief.

The faint smell of blood, the moans of someone experiencing pain and torment, the souls of the dead being carried off too God of death, the grieving of the living for the dead… A village which should be flourishing with life and blessings of the forest; this is not it. As for Selia, her spirit is still fatigued after battling against Geren and she wal- crawls behind me.

“This place doesn’t seem very welcoming.”

Selia whispers quietly to me from behind, feeling anxious. On the other hand, Christina is checking out the village with great interest, not caring about the overall atmosphere of the village. The fight against Geren should have considerably drained her both physically and mentally, but that is not what it looks like on her face, she is even tougher than I imagined. While answering Selia, I also throw out a question for Gio who is leading in the front.

“It can’t be help, the timing is bad after all. We have no choice but to take it for granted. Gio, would you tell me where we are heading to?”

“The patriarch’s place. There are warriors assembling there too. It is a good opportunity to introduce you, warriors from another race, to everyone.”

“Fumu, that sound reasonable.”

Diadora occasionally gives us a glance when we talk to Gio, but otherwise, she walks silently without talking to anyone. We walk until a gigantic tree is in sight, there are people gathering around it. The tree must have been big enough for thirty fully grown adults to hold hands and encircle the base(trunk) of the tree, and its big green leaves growing out give off a magnificent presence. This tree has the biggest house I’ve ever seen since stepping inside the Wood Elves village. I did not pay a lot of attention to the other houses, but I wonder if it is a flag proving this belongs to the patriarch. In front of the tree, there are all kind of warriors from Wood Elves, Wolf-men, Bird-men, Insect-people, etc. and as Gio brings us over, they all have a suspicious look on their faces.

“I have something to discuss with patriarchs. Are they inside, already?”

“Ah! You are here to discuss about the counter measure against people from Hell I assume. Gio, who are these people?”

A Wolf-man youth with gray fur glances at us and asks Gio. It speaks in a loud enough tone in which everyone can hear it.

“The explanation will be given to everyone now. You do not have to be worry. They say they are from a village called Bern, this human here is the descendant of those whom we had exchanged terms with long ago.”

“The patriarchs are at the usual place. You better hurry.”

Gio nod at the Wolf-man and guides us into the house. Inside the house, with just a glance, the unfamiliar furniture caught my interest, but given the situation, there is no time to be paying attention to such accessories. Gio walks through the patriarch house without being stopped, as we pass some Wood Elves, he would exchange greetings with them politely. After a while, we are lead to a large room in the back of the house. It is probably some kind

of meeting hall in case of an emergency. Passing through a white embroidery veil designed with various creatures living in the forest, I see people are sitting around a big round table, and from the look of it, the table was carved from the tree's trunk.

Sitting at the table are three people, there is a handsome looking Wood Elf with wrinkles on his face who seems to be taking the slight effect of passing time, next to him is a Wolf-man with a big body three times the size of the one from before with white fur, and finally an Arachne woman with a beautiful upper body of a lady and the lower half of a big spider with a red crest. These three people sit facing us, with the Wood Elf sitting in the middle, the Wood Elf village Chief Gio mentioned is unlikely to be one of the other two. The three look at us with piercing gaze, Gio and Fio lower the head a little.

"Chief Deo, Vuraiku-dono, Aljen'nu-dono, I've returned."

Deo is the Wood Elve's Chief, Vuraiku is the Wolf-man, and Aljen'nu is the name of the female Arachne. The gaze of the Wolf-man carries sense of distrust, while Aljen'nu's gaze is deeply observing.

Now then, how can I persuade them to at us gaze differently.

[To be continued]

Author's Comments

400, 000 PVs breakthrough celebration. Thank you very much.

Although it was divided, the remainder didn't change much.

==========

[Chapter 10]

-The Death Battle Previously in the Evening-

The gaze of the Chief, Deo, is indifferent compared to the looks the Wolf-man and Arachne woman are giving us. After a brief pause, Gio opens his mouth and speaks with a heavy tone.

"I've returned. Marl was safely found. More importantly. The result of the battle at the Northern wall has also been sorted out. Diadora skillfully fought the battle. Her opponent was a Demonic Flower Spirit from the miserable world."

Diadora, who was silent up until now, finally decides to speak up. From the standpoint of an ally, it would not do any good if Diadora remained silent forever.

"Um, yes. I was finally able to face the devil with the ability to drain life force and match her. Although I failed this time, the next time, that devil will be stopped *no matter what*."

"Save up your strength and don't be rash. You should keep your usual calm and composed state of mind rather than letting blood rush to your head and hinder your mind."

"I will put it aside for now. However, I will not forget what it is I must do."

"Yare-yare… Now then, Gio, would you mind introducing those people? Vuraiku and Aljen'nu seem to both share the same concern as I do."

"Please don't worry, I was going to get to it."

"I am worried. I do not want to cause an unnecessary quarrel in the middle of dealing with the Devil army."

That reminds me, before meeting with Marl, I did slay several wolves, but that should not possibly be the reason why Vuraiku is giving me that look… Vuraiku's strong physique and canine face are all wrapped in fur, especially his thick chest, it is not hard to imagine him having gone through hellish training to attain it. Aljen'nu's eight eyes carefully observe our every movement, while loosely crossing her arms over her white embroidered tunic. Besides the two eyes with the same texture as a humans but with red irises, there are spider eyes located on the forehead and temple region, three on each side for a total of six, all of which are harboring a cold glint ─ not exactly hospitable.

"These are the ones who helped Marl when she was being chased by Demonic soldiers. Although I think you have already known of this Chief, but they are people settled in the village called Bern, and due to serious incidents occurring, they had decided to investigate deep inside the forest. In the battle in the northern area, their contribution was vital. If it weren't for them, many lives would have perished."

"What a nostalgic name, Bern… Yes, surely that is the name of the village, but for someone from there to be capable enough to drive the devils away- no, it is certainly possible. As someone who is in charge, I thank you for your assistance in the fight against the devils."

“Fumu. Under the circumstances I was able to help. Therefore, you do not need be so humble, all is well. Though it is a little late for our introductions, I am Dran of Bern.”

“I’m Selia. I’m currently under Bern’s care.”

“Christina. I’m not someone who lives in Bern, and I’m simply following and assisting Dran in his investigation.”

“A terrible disaster has fallen upon us, but before we discuss any further, please have a seat.”

Being compelled by Chief Deo’s urging, we take our seats at the round table, and soon, an elf waiter comes out from the back room and arrives at the table carrying a wooden tray and three wooden cups. In each cup, a greenish liquid is served, which is apparently squeezed juice from fruits. A refreshing fragrance rises from the cup, flowing into the depths of my nose when I take a mouthful of the drink. The taste is a refreshing one.

“Having come a long way to the far west of this forest and being involved in its affairs. There is no point in withholding information. Gio, from where do you want to start the story?”

“The ‘gate’ appeared in the north, and from there, the devils came out and started massacring everyone living in the forest, including the area near your village, and since then, all the races living within the forest started to combine their power to fight against the devils.”

“Fumu. From what I hear, there isn’t anything in need of clarification. However, there is something that bothers me. Considering when the Hell gate appeared, and with it the following disaster, the Wood Elves’ arrival to deal with the situation is rather late.”

“Are you referring to not using the Spirit Pathway?”

Indeed, Deo nods seriously. The Spirit Pathway is a special path which one can take through the spirit world. Traveling through it, one can cover a far greater distance in the material world compared to the distance one has to travel in the other world. It is possible for a few high ranking Elves whose affinity with the forest is exceptionally high, to open a pathway. A probable reason as to why the pathway was not an option, may be due to the devils’ obstruction; the Elves lacked enough manpower to stop them.

“The one who identified himself as Georg has set a deadline of three days, and we will not comply with his demands.”

The countdown until the battle against Georg has begun, but the three leaders’ decision seems to have already been made. Vuraiku and Aljen’nu both don’t seem to have any dissatisfaction toward Deo’s words. It is in situations like these, that bonds of trust are formed.

“Reinforcements also won’t be arriving within three days time. Therefore, we must concentrate all of our remaining fighting force into bringing forth the destruction of the Hell gate so the forest can be cleansed of the invaders thereafter.”

The battles on the western side of the forest not only affect the Wood Elves but they also determine the fate of the neighboring villages of other races as well. Deo’s face deepens with solemnity, while the expression on Aljen’nu remains unchanged.

“The devils can maintain their existences in this world due to the power constantly being supplied through the Hell gate. If the gate is destroyed, the miasma leakage will cease. Afterwards, the forest can regenerate, and in due time, it will regain its former beauty.”

There is no mistake in what Aljen’nu is saying. If the destruction of the hell gate connecting to the material world can be accomplished, then the devils cannot stay for long and therefore their demise is set in stone. However, approaching the gate is problematic, the closer one gets to the gate, the stronger the demonic soldiers will become and the environment will grow harsher, until it is unbearable for living creatures. Taking this option, the enemy will grow even stronger while accepting the fact that allied forces will weaken as the result, but the leaders seem to understand the consequences of their decision. It requires them to accept a bitter sacrifice.

“We have three days time, it is best to use that time wisely to prepare for any possible events might happen. It may be the arrival of even more powerful enemies or the arrival of an entirely new army, those are a couple of possibilities. If this urgent matter can’t be settled, then only a dark future awaits everything living in this forest.”

“I understand the situation you all are facing. I’ve also spoken with Gio, and I am intending to fight in the upcoming battle. Of course, what I mean by this is to fight against the devils since there is always a chance that the devils can break through and then commence to slaughter my village and possibly invade the Kingdom itself. That is a possibility I cannot overlook.”

This is something that Christina-san, Selia, and I had already agreed upon. After once again hearing my affirmation, Christina-san and Selia don’t seem to be raising any objections. As someone who lives in the forest, Deo seems to hold doubt towards receiving assistance in the fight against the devils, when the help comes from those who are not native to the lush forest. Gio also had a hard time accepting our help and once again hesitates to speak, letting out a small groan. Just when I thought the silence was here to stay, the Wolf-man Vuraiku speaks up and gives me his approval.

“Our powers alone aren’t sufficient, it is not at the level we hope it to be, and as unbelievable as the report on your battle defending the northern wall sounds, such abilities are what we desperately need.

Yo Deo, we require the strength from the other party. We are in a difficult situation, many of our warriors have lost their lives. With our forces so few in numbers, it is unwise to refuse their assistance.”

Generally, the Wolf-man race as a whole is strong and possesses a great sense of pride, because of this there is hardly anything that would compel them to rely on other races. As “neighbors” living in the same forest, there is a certain camaraderie between the different races and they would happily join forces. For the proud warriors to ask outsiders for help, the matter at hand must have worn them out considerably. Although Diadora might be able to fight against Georg on equal grounds, even for those who possess exceptional power, it is quite reckless. While Varaiku’s words are forcing Deo to decide on an answer, Aljen’nu opens her mouth and presses Deo to make a decision. All eight of her eyes, filled with cleverness, are reflecting Deo’s face in them.

“I agree with Varaiku on this matter. Dran, Christina, Selia… Your proposal is an unexpected fortune for us. Let us try and ask for help in a normal manner that won’t trouble anyone. Deo, Varaiku, don’t you all agree? The fighting has temporarily ceased, but dawn is when we must finalize our decision. Anyway, they did uphold the terms once forged with the village Bern, no? Up until now, they have enjoyed many benefits from the trade of lumber by cutting down trees within a tolerable amount, we can additionally allow them to trade for the game the Wolf-men catch and the threads we Arachnes produce, even the Wood Elves can trade medical plants, flowers, and herbs. Even if it is on a small scale, the humans now have many valuable goods among them. In order to put one’s life on the line fighting, I believe we need to thoroughly consider their needs.”

Aljen’nu’s proposal gives me, as an individual, something to look forward to. Even without receiving any collateral, I will not hesitate to offer support in the fight against the devils, but now that the suggestion concerning Bern receiving compensation in the future is up, I feel fired up and ready to fight, all excited like a horse looking at carrots hanging in front of its eyes. Similarly to Lamias, Arachnes also require males from another race to breed with. As Chief, Aljen’nu is most likely planning to familiarize the Arachne with the humans to create new opportunities, specifically targeting males outside the forest.

Currently, Bern’s most profitable source of income is from timber, it outweighs the profit from the mining of Akira Spirit stone and the Elixirs that the Old Witch and I produce. If the magical plants in the forest of Ente can be traded to us, and the supply of the herbs is stable, then we can produce better Elixirs and our income would increase dramatically. Aljen’nu’s proposal stirs up my will to fight while pushing Deo to decide. The signs of hesitation are no longer visible on his face.

“That’s right. We ask for your help and compensation will be given in return. In that case, we shall accept your help, let us work together. We will be in your care.”

“We’ll try our best to meet your expectation with our poor abilities. Have any arrangements been made to inform the human kingdom of the situation? Getting help from human mercenaries may be a little dangerous, but in the worst case scenario, reaching out toward the kingdom for help is definitely something to consider…”

While we do not plan to let the situation turn into the worst possible scenario, there is a chance that this western stronghold might fall. If the Wood Elves are defeated, then the devil army will invade the regions surrounding Ente, that much is certain. It is safe to assume that the devils are currently organizing their forces, but if they come out on top in the end, then there would be piles of corpses and rivers will be dyed blood red. A reply to my question comes from a woman who appears from the back of the room.

“An envoy is being arranged by me and is set to go to the kingdom soon. Please focus your thoughts on fighting the devils without worries.”

A new Wood Elf showed up, and naturally, I turn my gaze at the direction the voice came from. The first thing I notice is her dazzling golden hair flowing down behind the back like gold threads and a dark green robe. Long and narrow eyes with irises the color of radiant emerald, skin as white as snow giving off a sense of transparency, I am almost unable to move because of the appearance entering the room, the resplendent female Wood Elf gives off the impression of a beautiful statue meant to be gazed upon. She seems to be in her late

twenties, but for the long-living elves, one cannot guess their age by their outward appearance. But if I have to guess, I would say that her age is below that of my soul, which trumps every living being in existence.

I keep my eyes on the female Wood Elf as she makes her way over to Deo and stands beside him on his right. Vuraiku along with Aljen'nu, Gio, and Fio all nod at their acquaintance's claims. As I am about to ask Gio or Deo who this newly arrived woman is, Christina who had been sitting on my side raises her voice in surprise. It is rare to see someone with her personality to behave in such way.

"Academy Director!"

Widening her deep blood red ruby-like eyes, Christina-san stares at the Wood Elf woman's face calling her Academy Director. The Wood Elf is the Director of Christina-san's academy it seems, those pretty emerald eyes glance at Christina's beautiful face showing rebuke.

"Christina, you must not speak in such a manner. That isn't how a lady expresses herself. Furthermore while we are here, I am not a Director but one of the many Wood Elves. Please call me Olivier casually."

"Christina-san, who is this?"

While Selia's split tongue is making small "ChiroChiro" noises, I ask Christina.

"She is Olivier, the Director at Galois Magic Academy where I'm attending. I knew she was a Wood Elf, but could it be possible that the Director's birthplace is in this very forest?"

"I am the Director of the Academy. As for the answer to your question, this village is my birthplace, that is correct. I ventured into the world outside and left the village and the forest a long time ago, but when I came to know of the situation I immediately rushed back. Since I had sorted out what needed to be done back at the Magic Academy before my departure, there is no need to worry about the circumstances there."

"H-hai. Is that so…"

It seems Christina-san doesn't know how she should act in front of Olivier as she can only smile with a troubled face. *Fumu. This is the first time Christina-san has behaved like this, I've seen something unusual but interesting.* As I think to myself, Selia brings her face close, and whispers into my ear:

"Dran-san, What is this Galois Magic Academy Christina-san speaks of?"

"Fumu? Galois is a city located south of Bern, and there is a prestigious Academy that specializes in teaching magic there. They named the Magic Academy, Galois, after the city's name. Geographically, Galois is located in the northern area of the kingdom and is a major economic cross-road, where news and special products gather from various northern regions. To sum it up, it is a city where money is gathered and distributed commercially. Naturally, lots of humans gather there as well. As for the Academy, they'll invite those who can use magic and educate magicians to work for the Kingdom."

Almost all of the students at the Magic Academy have large financial and political support. The students often have relatives who are aristocrats or wealthy merchants, but only a few of them can make it and become a court magician. The cost of attending the Magic Academy is just impossible for commoners to afford, in fact, the academy has scholarships which cover tuition and living expenses in place, but that only applies for those who have talent and were invited at an early age.

"He~. Well then Dran-san might get an invitation to the Magic Academy too. There are lots of people talented in magic in the village of Lamia where I grew up, but Dran-san is much more amazing compared to those people."

"Fumu, thank you. Well, the path which leads to becoming a court magician will be open to those who entered the academy and demonstrated profound results, it is one way for those who wish to improve their social standing to tread."

"N~ b-but if Dran-san leaves Bern, then I'll b-be lonely."

"Yes. I, too, will be lonely if I was to part ways with Selia and leave the village. Well, it is a far away talk for a farmer like myself."

I feel comfort in hearing Selia saying that she would be lonely if I am not around, in fact, personnel from the Galois Magic Academy do visit Bern, they set up entrance exam several times to find the talented ones and invite them to the academy. For now, I do not intend to enroll in the academy, but I need to think about it a little, for it could benefit the village in some other ways. Nevertheless, what is happening right now takes precedence. Crushing the devil army is currently the top priority.

"For now, we'll leave the job of contacting the Kingdom to Olivier-san, is that alright?"

"Yes, please leave it to me. I've already spoken to the few who had left the forest at one point to go. Otherwise, including me, everyone is going to fight to protect our home. The burden is not on Dran-san alone."

"Is that so, that's quite reassuring."

Then I'll destroy the gate so we can have an advantage over Georg. Tomorrow noon when the sun is at its peak, we will depart along with our allied forces. After the meeting, Deo let us stay in a vacant room inside the patriarch's house, we are guided to a large room. If we follow our common-sense, men and women that aren't family members nor lovers shouldn't be staying in the same room overnight, but we will have to since this is what was given to us.

Selia is feeling a little shy, Christina-san has already taken off her gear and is sitting on top of a bed, she doesn't seem to be bothered in the least. Although her womanly appearance is boastful with supreme graceful beauty and is giving off an elegant and noble atmosphere, her personality doesn't reflect her as a noble at all, I feel that she is closer to a commoner. My envisionment of nobles from stories could be wrong, or Christina-san is greatly different from ordinary nobles. I'll go with my intuition and pick the latter guess.

"Christina-san, I'll go outside for a little bit. I'll be back shortly."

Taking my armor off, I walk out while keeping my sword with me, “Haiii~~” says Selia, her voice full of vigor. I walk out of the room that was given to us inside the Sai-West village, the reason why I head out is to find a certain someone who headed off before we did during the meeting. It was a good unexpected turn of events that the devils ceased their raid and retreated. Tension is high within the village and there are less guards patrolling within, due to the majority of them now being stationed at the wall as protection from the overbearing Devil threat. As I walk I would sometimes receive a suspicious glance, but the patriarchs had declared that I am an ally so I move on without interruptions.

I wander my way to the base of a large tree, and soon find the ground beneath my feet is covered in countless flowers. Taking care of flowers is what the Wood Elves love to do in their everyday life, but instead of admiring the flowers, I have business with the figure standing there. Red, white, purple, blue, yellow, and green flowers in bloom, surrounding a black rose in the middle, the beautiful beyond compare Black Rose ― Diadora’s figure, I approach her, careful not to step on any flower.

“I wonder what business you have here so late in the night, Dran?”

Diadora’s voice rings like a golden bell* and I stop roughly ten steps from her. I can only see Diadora’s long black hair, what kind of expression she is having on her face I do not know. (T.L. Possible One Piece ref.)

“So you remember my name. I was simply looking for you.”

“Me? What is it, I am not in a very good mood. If it just trivia talk, I will decline. Please head back and rest for tomorrow. Unlike me, sleep is essential for humans like you.”

“I am grateful for your concern. Are you perhaps in a not so good mood due to the loss of your friends’ life to the enemy?”

Zawa, all the flower petals shock slightly even though there is no wind. For a moment, murderous intent emits from Diadora’s entire body inconceivable by only looking at her shadow on the ground, the flowers swing only momentarily and return to their natural point.

Fumu, Rafflesia is a very sensitive topic it seems. Those sturdy and thorny whips would be quite painful if I was to slip my tongue.

Diadora speaks in a voice filled with killing intent, it is as if the dead themselves came back from the realm of the dead and lash out.

“Yes, that is so. Thinking about that Demonic Flower Spirit, my amusement ceases and my anger wells up to no ends, that’s how I am right now.

Therefore, please don’t carelessly approach me, I do not know what I might do. I do not want to hurt an ally with great power whom we managed to forge a collaboration with.”

“Fumu, I see.”

I murmur but it is already too late since I am already besides Diadora. I drew close to Diadora without her noticing at all, it might feel like I abruptly appeared next to her, as she turns her head at me, surprised.

“Since when? No, did you not hear me when I said you shouldn’t approach me carelessly?”

I answer Diadora while staring into her eyes. To Diadora it might sound like dim speech.

“So I had prepared myself sufficiently and approached. Isn’t that enough?”

“…..Huh? You, are a strange one.”

To Diadora who lets out a sigh, I can only smile wryly. With these speech patterns, I can make the conversation more engaging.

I guess I am a strange one. Iya, I still retain my dragon senses and intuitions, among humans I definitely fit into the strange category.

“Well said. If you are completely fine with it, so be it.”

“I see. I suppose I can share my trouble with a human like you.”

You do not have to share such a thing if you do not wish it so, fumun. Diadora stops talking and silence fills the air, causing me to feel as if time itself stopped briefly. The moon above shines its brilliant white light onto the ground where wet blood was once spilled, the wind picks up and carries the sweet smell of roses, the scent of blood slowly eases away. There isn’t a single word that can describe the wind bathing in the moonlight carrying such a sweet smell, the fight against the devils seems like a bad dream for me.

However, fighting the devils is an obvious reality. Many who fought against the devils got hurt and bled, bearing wounds and losing their lives; hatred and sorrow make their way into the hearts of those who live in this forest. Unexpectedly, Diadora opens her mouth to speak again. During the moments of silence, what was it that caused the Black Rose’s Spirit to move her mouth.

“All of Rafflesia’s victims were good children.

Some were a little stubborn, others loved to do pranks, nevertheless they were all good natured and carefree children, such good children did not deserve to die. They did not have to! Therefore, I will not forgive her. I survived, and I have a duty to clear those children’s resentments. Even if I have to give up my body, I will surely kill that woman.”

Zawari, zawari, again, the roses scream. The wind scatters as if scared of Diadora’s abhorrence, and the clouds cover the moon seemingly hiding it away from Diadora. Black Rose’s face is very beautiful and proud, beyond human’s imagination, but her mind is drunken with negative emotions and it is affecting her very surroundings. My body too, is covered in Diadora’s dreadful aura, my heart is beating slow and unnatural, and my body temperature had decreased to a temperature as cold as ice water.

The dreadful aura is exerting a strange abnormality onto my body, Diadora's hatred runs deep. Slaughtered by Rafflesia's hands, are those who Diadora treasured, who must have been like family to her. If I witnessed my father, mother, along with my siblings die through such torment, then I, too, would be drowning in rage and hate, similar to Diadora.

"… I see. Unfortunately, I do not know how to help you."

Even if I were to exact revenge for Diadora, those who died will not be happy, for there is no hope in revenge, but those aren't the kind of words that will change her resolve. There also isn't any reason to dissuade Diadora from taking revenge against her enemy. At the least, she should exact her vengeance without losing her life, that would be for the best.

"It is a little too plain. I do not know the reason for someone of your strength to lend us your help, did Aljen'nu promise you something in return? Or is it because it would be troublesome if our village was to fall to evil?"

"Fumu, I'll be honest with you. Like Diadora had guessed, the fact that we will have compensations is nice, but reality is that this village cannot be allowed to fall to the devils. Before that, I would be embarrassing my parents, from whom I learned to extend my helping hand to those who are in need. The people living in Ente have a very good relationship with my village, therefore I simply want to use my strength and help. Even if there was no compensation, this encounter of ours is simply by chance, I choose to lend my strength to you. Believe me Diadora."

"Is that so. You, if you insist… I'll believe you."

Fumun.

"Dran, you are a strange person, a mysterious man. When looking into your eyes, I calm down greatly. It feels as if I am looking deep into your soul, but it is not an unpleasant feeling. You, are you really a human?"

"Hahaha, this body of mine is human, and it was given to me by my parents."

She's very perceptive. Just for the record, that wasn't a lie. My body is definitely human, there is no mistaking it. But from the memories in my dragon soul, and while I'm alive, I can strengthen and reproduce my body as much as I want to, but when talking about my race, I am human. Even if I were to say it aloud, regardless, I do appear to be suspicious from other people's point of view.

"Fun~, my mind has grown a little more cheery."

"You need to take care of your mind. I almost forgot why I came looking for Diadora while talking, I have something else concerning you. Diadora, Rafflesia wounded you didn't she?"

"…..I wonder what you are talking about?"

"*Diadora.*"

I speak in a slightly stronger tone, then I look at her gently. Diadora admits defeat and turns her delicate neck sideways. Diadora moves her supple right hand fingers from the base of her neck down toward her navel, *shururi shururi*, the dress fabrics retreat, wriggling to the left and right, like a myriad of little snake. This dress is probably part of Diadora's body, which appearance she can change at will. Just like that, the moonlight shines down and reveals them, it is as if the moonlight concentrates only on the rich ample white breasts and the modest cave in, the belly button, on her abdomen. And right in between her breasts and slightly above her belly button an area is shown where the skin is dry and darkened black. The once beautiful skin had lost its touch, now it is an exhibit of a truly tragic and ugly sight.

"It's really not as bad as it seems. Do not worry. This won't be of a hindrance in battle."

"Is that so. Do you mind if I touch it?"

"Huh? Sure, if you are fine with such body."

Diadora shrugs her small shoulders, her gesture doesn't seem to have any mischievous intention. From where Black Rose was born, exposing her body to the opposite sex doesn't seem to cause her any shame. I slowly reach out and touch her skin gently, treating it like delicate glass-work, feeling the discolored area of her skin. Sliding my fingers from the middle of her exposed breasts and down to her welly shaped navel, Diadora's skin feels very dry and rough. It wasn't just her vitality that was absorbed, her very soul was damaged as well. To be able to damage the soul, that Demonic Flower Spirit Rafflesia, must be a considerably high ranking flower spirit like Diadora.

"Is it not an enjoyable touching experience?"

"That is not the case. Diadora is too beautiful, I am doing my best in enduring my urges, but I feel like I'm about to push you down any moment. That's because I am a healthy man."

"Is it like that? I understand little about romance and marriage so I tend to treat them like a breeze of the wind. So, may I interpret your word as you complimenting my attractiveness?"

"You may interpret it so. But please be more vigilant toward the opposite sex."

"Why do I need to do such a thing? Every Dryad seems to have an enjoyable friendship with beautiful boys and strong men."

Dryades are tree spirits. The appearance of beautiful women united with trees, they are a different species of tree, the Dryades would have sexual intercourse with males of other races and take their vitality as food. In addition, sometimes, they would drag their favorite partner inside their real body, and they would enjoy and preserve their love in a different time flow ignoring whatever happens on the outside world. Because of that, Dryades are known as dangerous yet mysteriously glamorous spirits who would sometimes deceive men.

"Dryades are different kinds of spirits, it is best to not fully imitate their behaviours."

Apparently this Black Rose spirit is quite honest and pure in certain areas. You will very likely be deceived by bad magicians if you were to head into a town. In that sense, you're similar to Selia.

While holding such thoughts, I pour vitality into Diadora's body, converted from my dragon power. Diadora's body sucks in my life force like dry ground absorbing water. Thereupon Diadora's discolored skin glows faintly in rainbow colored light, then the darkened skin changes back to its original white colour.

"!! This is…, I'm becoming more and more suspicious whether or not you are a human."

"I'll be glad if you can just think of me as a mysterious man."

I reluctantly remove my fingers from feeling Diadora's skin, and let out a wry smile. Diadora doesn't seem to like insisting in fruitless questioning, and so questions concerning me are no longer being asked.

"A slightly mysterious man. I'll leave it at that then. And thank you. For healing my injury, I offer my gratitude. As a thank you gift, after the battles end and if all goes well, shall we imitate what the Dryades do? Men like you love those things."

"It's not ok to propose such a thing even in a teasing manner. Seriously, my reasoning will collapse. Well then… I shall go back to my room."

"Yes, it was very enjoyable speaking to you. I, myself, find it surprising. May good dreams come your way."

"Thank you. Even if you do not require sleeping, it is still good to rest your body and mind."

That concludes mine and Diadora's meeting tonight. It would be a relief if I won't have to witness as many deaths as I did this evening. Tomorrow, I will fight the devils under that watchful sun, and they will resent what they did tonight.

♦ ♦ ♦

While Dran is sleeping soundly in the village called Sai-West, near the Hell gate located in the northern region of Sai-West, four devil commanders led by Georg gathered. Countless faces are on the Hell gate's frame and one could hear the agony in the deads' voices, all light is absorbed and none is reflected back, it has a rectangular shape and is made up of obsidian. Standing in front of that Hell gate and acting as gatekeepers are Georg and Geren, surrounding it are countless demonic soldiers which look like worms wriggling from afar. There is not a single tree in sight and the ground's color had changed to deep violet, with bubbles swelling all over the terrain. Every time a bubble pops, it releases an odor that would make any living being want to vomit. Around the Hell Gate, the miasma corrosion continued to worsen, although this part of the forest had lost all of its overflowing life, the beauty caused by the cold moonlight remains unchanged. Although one can only watch this scenery in silence, the loud roaring sound from the bottom of the devils' lungs constantly resounds. The wounds that Dran and Christina had inflicted on Georudo infuriated him, and now he's taking his anger out on eight demonic soldiers.

Bou~tsu. A tremendous sound is heard every time his spear is swung, and with it follows the bodies of five demonic soldiers, scattering into the wind. Furthermore, along with Georudo, Rafflesia also shared the same thoughts of taking revenge upon Dran and Diadora.

Rafflesia sits upon a rock pile, overlooking the eight demonic soldiers. Whom were supposed to charge at the enemy as a vanguard, but slaughtered for failing to flank the enemy due to their incompetence. No matter what anyone says, it looks like Rafflesia is sitting on a rocky throne, looking down on others like a queen, her face emotionless; it is obvious that she is saving up her emotion for when she faces Diadora again.

“Really now Georudo and Rafflesia, eight demonic soldiers should be the limit. The soldiers won’t arise without permission you know that.” Geren says bitterly.

He then sticks his war ax into the ground, and leans against it comfortably. Because his face is mostly covered by the helmet, his expression cannot be seen, his lower jaw however seems to resemble a human’s jaw. Next to Geren is Georg, who is crossing his arms and staying silent, there is no agitation seeing his comrades’ actions, Geren thinks to himself “*is this guy sleeping?*” but he quickly disperses this thought.

“Oi, Georg, what did our Lord say?”

Fortunately Georg replies. He doesn’t seem to be dozing off.

“The next battle against the two haughty people is going to be exciting . Do as you like. Oh Geren, you look quite anxious waiting to fight them.”

“You could say that. After all, that Christina child is of the Superior Original, she has lots of courage and great ability. The daughter of the Lamia race, Selia, has yet to harden her snake scales, the upcoming fight is quite promising.”

“Fu fun, you don’t sound very cheery. I am pleased by that man called Dran. It has been a long time since I last enjoyed fighting that much.”

Usually Georg doesn’t act like this, Geren thinks to himself, he wasn’t lying when he said he admired his opponent. Georg had lived for nearly a thousand years, and this kind of opponent is someone that appears every hundred years or so.

“Best of all. I thought that it would be an unexpected blessed joy that can only be achieved in the battle between Gods and Evil Gods, to think I would be able to experience such joy in the mortal world…”

Thirty or more demonic soldiers were blasted sky high making loud noises, interrupting Georg’s words. *Eie*, Geren discards his good mood mask, takes up his axe that was sticking in the ground and heads for Georudo. And soon enough, the sound of the quarrelling Geren and Georudo is heard, Geren hits Georudo on the head and his abdomen using his axe, and finally the rowdy noise made by the demonic soldiers is suppressed. While looking at the sight with his eyes, Georg is visualising a different matter. The man who identified himself as Dran, the combat abilities he showed during the fight. His magic and his touki. Something, a fragment of an undeniable piece of memory….

“There was a time when the people and the Evil Gods in Hell were trampled upon, massacred, shuddering in fear before the might of an ancient dragon. Any Evil God or Demon Lord would tremble in fear just by the mention of its name, no matter what kind of evil deity they

happen to be, all they can do is to despair and let out cries of griefs, it could be possible that… that individual dragon might have changed its form or reincarnated into a human being.

In any case, a fight that can get my blood boil. Come now, the sooner the better. I am looking forward to this long, long awaited battle."

[To be continued]

==========

Author's Note

Sorry if it's boring.

==========

[Chapter 11]

-March to the Dark Forest-

I go back to the room Deo had prepared for us after finishing up the conversation with Diadora. Christina-san, Selia, Marle, and Fio greet me. Entering, past the door, there are two beds against the left and right side of the wall. On each wall, there are refreshing flowers arranged inside vases sitting on top of the lantern fretwork decorated with patterns of a dancing fairy on it.

On top of the wooden floor, there is a thick layer of white carpet with exquisite embroidery design skillfully put in place. Lastly, the cushions are made up of plant fibers and fully stuffed with cotton. Selia is relaxing comfortably as if she's at home. Covering the large window is a simple and neat laced curtain. The moonlight shining on the see-through curtains caused it to appear pale white.

"Fio and Marle, you two came over. I heard that staying up late at night isn't good for your skin."

Fio changed her clothes and is now dressing in a thin and loosed green sleepwear piece. Beautiful fabric with a smooth luster, it must have been made from the threads harvested from the silkworms of Ente. The fabric around the sleeves and neck area seems thick but it is in fact light.

When such high quality material can be traded in the future, people who are interest in the cities will certainly pay a large amount of money for it.

While such worldly thoughts occur in the corner of my mind, Fio raises the wooden cup in her hand and replies.

"It's alright. If someone drinks this flower tea mixed with Falena honey, their skin will remain smooth and healthy for a long time."

Fio gives me a reply. On her skin, no dirt, no pimple, and no stain, are visible. The Wood Elves aren't the only Elven race that have beauteous features, and thus food and drinks are not the key element which support their good looks.

"Fumu… Still, old age will not leave the skin undamaged."

"A girl loves to consider herself beautiful all year-round, Dran."

Fio replied in a cold, harsh tone, which I find interesting. I can only shrug my shoulders lightly and give a follow up reply.

"I'll keep that in mind".

Perhaps the reality is, that this Wood Elf girl's actual age might have exceeded three digits. Well, only speaking about outer appearance, which I can alter if I so choose, denying Fio's words is unneeded. I proceed to sit down on an unoccupied chair and Selia considerately passes me two cups each on a dish, filled with still steaming soup.

The cups and dishes have various details and cleverly carved designs such as of ivies, flowers, and pecking birds. Each feather on the small bird was carved in detail, the flower petals look so fresh and soft as if wanting to sway in the wind. Wonderful craftsmanship and artistic skills were put into creating these.

Cultivating plants and the artistic nature of those who live in the forest is a big part of what defines who they are, specifically for the Wood Elves. I am touched, I think to myself.

“Dran-san, please. Here is today’s supper.”

“Thank you, Selia. Fio came over and supplied the meal, it seems.”

“Um. I fought against that person on an empty stomach so it was difficult.”

“It’s delicious-ni. Christina-san and Selia-san said it was delicious-ni.”

Marle, seated on top of a blanket made from leaves on top of Fio’s lap while eating a cookie held by both hands, spoke up to me with a smile on her face. The purest sincerity contained in the voice of this little fairy captivated me. Feeling like so, I let out a small smile.

“If Marle says so, then it must be true. Now, I will gratefully accept it.”

The large dish is filled with thin rice porridge and gives off a sweet aroma of vegetables used in the cooking process. My stomach only had dried meat and bread earlier during the day, thus it is growling due to hunger. After all, the Wood Elves’ ingredients for their daily diets can only be found within the Ente forest.

Already, Fio, Selia, and Christina had finished their meal as the girls’ dishes are empty. It seems that some of the seasoning such as salt and pepper was not put into the soup, but by using various vegetable, a complicated and hard to describe taste of sweetness was created. Although the meal is quite simple, I would not grow tired of eating and drinking this everyday.

At first, the rice porridge’s fragrance suggested a taste slightly like boiled wheat, but after deeply thinking about it, from the sweet smell and a tender sweet taste, it’s closer to that of honey. Taking the first spoonful of the rice porridge and putting it inside my mouth, my tongue immediately flickers due to honey-like sweetness spread out on top of it. After tasting such refined flavor, I feel satisfied from the bottom of my heart and let out a breath of relief.

“My mind feels at ease after having a taste of this. I feel like I can eat this forever.”

“Fufu, it’s good that you’ve taken a liking toward it. Christina-nante finished eating hers in a blink of an eye. When she was eating, she looked comfortable and beautiful.”

“I’ve displayed something embarrassing.”

Says Christina-san. On her pretty face floats a shy and embarrassed smile. Since even before coming into the forest of Ente, we had nothing but preserved food prepared for the duration the trip, I have to agree that our appetite for different kinds of food had risen greatly. This

person's desire for a fresh meal easily betrayed her noble atmosphere. I can imagine what it was like despite the fact that we only know each other for a short period of time.

"Ha~ Christina-san, she ate so much yet she still retains her slim figure. If only I can improve my figure to be as fit as hers, I'm so jealous."

"It is in my constitution to not gain fat. I do not miss any of my training. Everything I eat, I intend to be use. It is because I followed these guidelines strictly that I am how I am today."

"But Christina-san's waist is really tight, for you to show that appearance. As a woman, I am dreadfully envious of you-desu."

"When you put it like that Selia, the same thing applies to you."

Christina-san replies to Selia shyly. It doesn't look like she is accustomed to this type of conversation, or else it could be that when talking to someone of the same generation and sex, Christina-san's tongue freezes and becomes dull.

"I take in life energy as food and because of that, I don't have any excessive useless meat on my belly or under my arms."

"From my perspective, Christina-san and Selia are plenty beautiful with large breasts and splendidly narrowed waist.

I, as a Wood Elf, inherited my race's slim body trait. We can only gain muscle to some extent. Do you think both of you are in the position to complain about your appeal?"

Fio starts to touch herself at her chest and then around her waist line making *petapeta* sound. Doing something like that in front of a man's eyes is a little improper, but it's just an innocent act. Well, taking a look at Fio's figure closely, I am certain that in her chest region, behind her sleepwear, two small breasts are present. Those curves just aren't as highly drawn mountains as Christina-san and Selina's. Looking at her proportions a little closer, Fio's long and slender body lines were elegantly drawn. That and the tender skin covering her limbs makes it seem like she is a delicate piece of artwork that would shatter if the slightest amount of force was to be exerted upon it.

Giving off the impression of a lovely and transient girl just like a flower, which blooms in a field. It's also a form of beauty. Fio's currently blessed with a slightly voluptuous chest and overall modest looking proportions. Speaking of which, because director Olivier was wearing a robe, her curves were hidden from my sight, thus her figure are unclear. However, that's not to say that there's no compliment for her voluptuous figure.

While I was rudely taking a close look at Fio, wearing her one piece nightwear, Fio herself and Christina took notice of my gaze, then Selia too, noticed and gives me a look full of criticism and in fact, the gazes feel as if they are piercing through my body. Although I did not look at Fio with lust, it would seem the ladies are very much one minded and had decided that I had given her that kind of gaze.

"Dran, can you stop staring in this circumstance? Your action isn't something to speak well of in any way."

“You are a young man who had his coming-of-age. I understand that you would have interest in such things. You’re a man after all, but please consider the time and place….”

Fio doesn’t seem to be angry and instead speaks to me in a teasing manner, while Christina-san uncomfortably lets her gaze wander, mildly showing me rebuke. Selia too, starts to pout and puffs her cheek, her eyes narrow and her gaze sharpens to the point I feel as if it will puncture a hole in my face. Marle is the only one who doesn’t care about our little exchange as she keeps nibbling on a small piece of a leftover cookie.

“Please don’t feel so downhearted. Fio doesn’t need to feel envious about anyone else, I was just speaking out mindlessly.”

“Fun~. Well, let’s just leave it at that. Since there are one man and four women, I sort of feel like teasing Dran.”

“Eee, Fio wants to tease Dran-san -ni?”

Staying quiet up until now, Marle speaks up and enters the conversation, Fio’s speech is then thrown into disarray as her best friend looks up at her.

“Its not like that, Marle. I was just saying, just saying. Really, I’m not intending to tease Dran.”

“If that’s the case, then it’s ok -ni,” Marle replies feeling relief and lets out a small smile. Afterwards, we start talking about the outside world, outside of the forest, for some time. The stories we tell each other paint a picture of flowers blooming energetically in a field*, and for the first time since we met, I feel our relationships have greatly deepened, that is until Christina-san begins to share her story, then, the flowers couldn’t help but wither away. (T.L. I’m pretty sure it meant the atmosphere.)

Christina-san is enrolled in the Magic Academy in the city of Galois located south of Bern, and since she is on a long holiday break, she chose to stay in Bern for the time being, she also states that someone of her bloodline is living in Bern. Following that, the subject of her story focuses on details about life at the magic academy rather than herself, Christina-san’s red lips hesitate to open up, it’s obvious that she has difficulty putting words on her tongue.

Who could it be in the village of Bern —— the village’s Chief would be be my first guess —— but it doesn’t matter, the lineage of this silver haired scarlet eyed beauty isn’t a concern at this moment.

Fortunately for Christina-san, no one tries to follow up with questions, seeing her stuttering speech. Taking notice of Christina-san’s frowning expression, Selia quickly changes the topic of the conversation to about herself. Seeing that she is attentive, I am impressed.

“It’s my turn, I come from the village inhabited by Lamias called Jarura located on the southern side of the Moresu mountain range!”

“Is that so? Even though there are snake people living near Sai-West, there are no Lamia, I’m quite eager to hear your story.”

Selia intended to change the flow of the conversation and Fio went with the flow. Seeing that the attention is no longer on her, Christina let out a sigh of relief. In the meanwhile, Selia continues to tell her story. She talks about what a Lamia's community does and how it functions, and the ways they carry out their everyday life. Judging from her story, it's obvious that it is a society that hasn't been influenced much by human beings. The same thing could be said of the Wood Elves, Fio is very interested in Selia's story and focuses all her attention on Selia.

"A Lamia and a man from another race, they have children and live happy together. There are various Demi-Human tribes living in the Moresu Mountains as well, and we would exchange goods from time to time.

Aljen'nu-san's carapace colour texture is different from Arachne-san, while there are Slime-san, and Harpy-san living near by as well. Beside, most recently, Lizard-san was moving and settling near the lake close to our village, and sometime you can even see the beautiful appearance of Dragon-san too.

The mountain range is vast and no one knows exactly how vast it is, but even so, Water Dragon-san lives in the lake, sometimes Wind Dragon-san would soar over the sky, and it's certain that in a cave somewhere, Earth Dragon-san would be dozing off."

Arachne, Slimes, and Harpies: Although all them had sometime, in the past, tasted human flesh, I believe that it is possible for all races to come to a mutual understanding.

Maybe by using Selia and the Lamia race as a medium, and opening up a new route into the Moresu mountain range, trading with these races can be done.

Now is not the time to think about that matter, it is best to keep those thoughts in the back of my mind and focus more on the ongoing story. Currently in the back of my mind, the Beast race and the Wood Elves living in Ente, the Arachne, Slimes, and Harpies living in the Moresu mountain range, as well as Lizard tribe, all gathering at Bern, all the different races with their own respected culture history intimately exchanging words, money and goods, as well as different type of foods and drinks, putting prior consideration into it, such is the way which I imagine what the future can be like.

"For generations, Jarura was governed by the Lamia Queen, but this is not heredity. There would be candidacies or recommendations, and in the end, the people would vote for who will be queen."

"It's an election then. Here inside Ente, we Wood Elves do things differently, Mikohime-sama would listen to Yggdrasil-sama's voice and the partrich of each village would assemble together to assist Mikohime-sama. And that is because Mikohime-sama is someone who speaks for Yggdrasil-sama, and she does not take part in political affairs thoughtlessly."

I find the stories they tell are unexpectedly useful, meanwhile the moon continues to rise further up the horizon.

Without having to worry about the Devils attacking, the conversation heated up and continued well into the night up until midnight, after which we went straight to bed. As I greet my consciousness as I'm awakening in the morning however….

“Fumu, it’s stiff.”

It’s somewhat painful. It feels almost as if I’m being squeezed on all sides and directions. I try to move my arms and legs but my limbs barely move, this situation is far from what you call freedom. Opening my eyelids slowly, I find myself inside a room and see the morning sunlight illuminating the curtain, the air smell differently from when I usually get off of bed in Bern.

This is inside Sai-West, my lungs are filled with the mixed smell of flowers and trees everywhere. And there’s another one that’s different from those, a sweet scent is being emitted from the back of my spinal cord and down to my aching lower abdomen.

“Munya~”

Whatever it is, it looks like it is still half asleep, but it looks like Selia’s serpent lower half is trying to strangling my body like a game to it’s death――*So Selia is the one at fault here*――her serpent half had completely coiled around me. Although my body was being coiled around by Selia’s lower half and was lifted off from the bed, I was still able to stay asleep in such a posture. For two people to be sharing the same room, no one seems to be on guard at all, it’s most likely that Selia did it subconsciously.

While Selia’s lower body was like that, well, her upper half had her arms wrapped around my neck, hugging my turned head. Being hugged so tightly, I might be mistaken for a certain someone’s stuffed hugging animal or something, and her face is nearly touching the nape of my neck. The sweet scent from earlier had been stimulating my male part, it is in a Lamia’s nature to be sending off alluring pheromones to seduce the opposite sex of another race after all.

Even if there’s someone with a mind made of iron and was able to withstand the scent, their iron will would be melted away with just a gentle tempting touch on the cheek and their reason would be utterly blown to pieces with a luring whisper in their ear. Any male would fall prey to the demonic snake’s charm. Although, when one sees Selia’s innocent and comfortable looking sleeping face while mumbling, no sane person would think that this girl is a demonic snake. That charm is something Lamia possess, and is mostly used to ensure that their prey won’t escape their grasp.

“Time to get up, Dran.”

“Good morning to you, Christina-san. Even though the sun had just risen, you’re up early.”

I took off my gear and went to sleep like Christina-san did, and Christina-san who had woken earlier than the rest of us sits down on top of the bed. With Selia coiling around me, I turn and give out a small smile. Already with her face cleansed, she’s preparing to look fresh, Christina-san then ties up her silver hair using a deep blue ribbon with gold thread embroidery on it, then she proceed to put on her armor and hangs her sword on her waist, now she’s ready to head out and fight.

“Have you gotten a little excited perhaps? Your eyes seem to be much clearer than usual. You didn’t take notice when Selia was making her way crawling into your bed. Because I

thought that surely you weren't going to be attacked, and because you were asleep while I was drowsy, I didn't do anything to stop it."

"Perhaps she was probably searching for the warmth of a human's skin, and it's likely that she was doing it while being unconscious and also to replenished life energy for the upcoming battle."

"She did that, by chance?"

Christina-san raises her lovely eyebrows in suspicion making small wrinkles appear on top of it. Lamia would often suck the life energy out of their prey, robbing their prey's life. Whether it be conscious or unconscious, if by chance Selia was to suck away my life energy, my life would be in danger, this is probably what Christina-san fear happened.

"Fumu, the amount of life energy Selia took was only in small quantity. It will not hinder me in battle in anyway, it's ok to not worry about it too much."

Sometimes, Selia's lower body would move up and down rubbing against my body while making the "ZuriZuri" sound in the process, the superb feeling of countless scales rubbing against me gives me so much pleasure that I am unable to move. Then, Selia's hair and cheek sweeps over my neck, and I would feel that my whole body is being tempted every time her lips touch my skin. I release life energy along with the sexual pleasure, the sleeping Selia sips up my power, completely oblivious to her surroundings. I had intended to share with her my vigor before the fighting start, but there should be no problem if it's like this.

I take a glance at Selia's face and notice that her lips curl up slightly. Her eyelids shake and in turn make her golden eyelashes tremble, her attractive glossy red lips shine with the morning light, her straight and graceful nasal bridge is very lovely, an absolute beauty that would make others completely forget they had ever seen a demon prior to seeing her. Although I want to brush her golden hair to reveal even more of her white cheek, my arms are being tightly restrained by Selia's lower half. And due to Christina-san and I conversing with one another, Selia was finally starting to wake. Her eyelashes tremble greatly, but she manages to open her eyelids completely revealing her blue eyes and the first thing she sees is my face.

"Unn~…..are? Dran-shi."

Seems like her mind is still fog with sleep, Selia said my name with her tongue not completely functioning. The difference between our position before and now is that we are facing each other and are close enough to feel each other's breath, all of which still hasn't sunk in yet. Selia knows that it is morning and it takes her time waking up, I will wait for Selia to realize the situation without rushing it. Christina-san unnecessarily decides to butt in.

"Good morning, Selia. Did you sleep well?"

"Hai, I'm very well rested."

Though she said that, Selia is still feeling sleepy and uses her left hand to cover her mouth, *fuwaa*, letting out a yawn and in the corner of her eyes, small drops of tear leak. Rubbing her sleepy eyes, Selia's sleepiness gradually slips away until she finally takes notice of me, her

large body winces. It's good that she starts to tremble, but her lower snake body starts to squeeze a little tighter altogether as she trembles. I bear with it and keep my voice from blabbing out. Speaking aloud, Selia hesitates as she isn't sure who is at fault.

"That, could it be that Dran-san on my bed…."

Selia speaks in a timid tone. Shyness and bewilderment was mixed in Selia's words, I then tell her the truth in an indifferent tone.

"I'm on Selia's bed, no it's quite the opposite. Turn that way, that's Selia's bed isn't it?"

I use my chin and point her in the right direction, Selia quickly realizes what I said was true and turns red, everything, all the way until her ears are red.

"Ano ano ano go, gomenasai*. Ah, why did I enter Dran-san's bed. Soot, I'll get off immediately." (T.L. "Eh ehh ehh, I'm, I'm so sorry!")

Selia undoes her coiling lower body that was holding tight around me, as her tail comes off my bed, she groans as she holds both of her hands against her bright face. Seeing that Selia won't stop trembling, I decide to tease her, I grab her right wrist and draw her close.

I catch Selia off guard therefore she couldn't put up any resistance, and once again the tip of our noses are close enough to feel the other's breathing. With Selia staring at my face and having my image reflect off her pupil, I whisper to Selia.

"I'm sure that was night crawling, don't you agree? I am a man you know. So, one can say that your action was not unintentional. If Selia agree to it, then I can help end your suffering."

In that instant, Selia's face heats up even more and I can almost see steam coming off of her bright red face, her mouth opens and closes furiously, she doesn't know how to reply. Her tail stands straight upward from the middle to the tip, Selia's current mental state is in complete chaos. Feeling that I may have gone a little overboard, I reflect on my action and slowly release Selia from my grasp. While Selia and I were doing our series of exchange, Christina-san watched and her face has reddened as well, then she forcefully clears her throat.

"A-ahem hum ahem. So, Dran. I know that you weren't being serious, so stop teasing Selia already. Moreover, please consider your action in the appropriate time and place. Present in this room aren't just you two but I as well, for you to be doing something like this just before the battle against the devils, I disapprove of your conduct, yup.*" (TL: she speaks in a tripping manner.)

Christina-san seems uncomfortable with this kind of atmosphere.

"Fufu, Christina-san is quite innocent. That said, fumu, there's some truth in your word so I'll say two things. Selia, I'm sorry, I went overboard with my prank. Come now, let's first wash our faces and then we will head for breakfast."

To show my consideration, I lightly tap Selia's cheek, afterward Selia's red cheeks finally return to normal.

“Enough already! I’ll go and freshen up myself, and Dran-san, please fix your words and manner next time!

I am at fault for entering Dran-san’s bed at my own convenience, I’ll reflect on this in the future.”

“Fumu, I’ll keep that in mind.”

I reply to Selia’s demand, but her snake eyes stare at me half heartedly and holding doubt, it would seem that my words are only half as trustworthy toward Selia.

Not long after, Gio and Fio show up after I finish with breakfast, I move on to carefully sorting out the Spirit Stones and taking extra care with the Akira Stone, and then I put on my gears. By the time all preparations were finished, the sun is just short from its highest point in the sky, and so we gather at Sai-West’s village hall. Looking up at the giant tree that stood out from the countless other trees in this village, the gigantic tree along with its leaves and branches spread wide covering the sky above the plaza that is in front of the building where we spoke to the elders the day before. This tree is the single biggest and oldest living tree in the entire Sai-West village. Meanwhile, Gio goes to fetch the elders.

When they arrive, everyone rises up, from the elderly to the young, and from the injured soldiers to the soldiers who survived in order to fight back, these warriors are all ready to engage Georg in battle and close the gate. The Wood Elves’ patriarch, Deo, the Wolf-men’s patriarch, Varaiku, and the Arachne’s matriarch, Aljen’nu, have gathered all the soldiers’ attention onto themselves. Gio comes back and before we know it, we are in the middle of the soldiers’ ranks. Then, Diadora and Olivier notice us and make their way over.

Diadora and Olivier’s appearances are almost identical to how they were yesterday, apart from Diadora’s dress which is part of her body, I had thought that Olivier would have changed into her battle clothing, but she is still wearing the same robe, just like yesterday, when she was in the meeting, holding a staff. I look at her staff that is almost the same height as its wielder more closely, the staff was carved from a tree branch originating from the World Tree, and has a total of ten magic stones and each of different elements embedded in it, which are: earth, water, fire, wind, ice, thunder, light, darkness, time, and space. That isn’t an item anyone can get their hands on. As Olivier makes her way over to where I am standing, the gazes that the crowd is giving her is a little strange, specifically the groups of Wood Elves and Wolf-men who live in Ente, apparently what they are actually looking at are the clothing and equipment she’s wearing from the outside world.

It seems that beside from Olivier, no one else had ventured to the outside world. *Not venturing outside of the forest――they probably don’t know the outside world’s culture very well――they lack experience, experiences that warrior from out there possess and they don’t.*

“Christina, you seem well.”

“Director Olivier-san. Yes, I have no particular problem. I’m well prepared and ready to engage the enemy.”

“That’s good. Such times are truly unfortunate, I did not intend to meet a noblewoman in such a place, please don’t overwork yourself, you are still young. Please don’t put yourself in life threatening scenarios. Please retreat in case the battle becomes too intense. If we lose, the remaining Wood Elves will join hands with the Kingdom and clash against the devils another time.”

Although her expression remains unchanging like a statue, the emotion in her words was quite expected, since Olivier is a Wood Elf who holds the title of Director at the magic academy, she cares for her student’s well being greatly. In contrast, Christina-san answer with a bright smile on her face. She smiles graciously, which causes a disturbing ripple in my mind.

“Please don’t be so sorry about this matter. Olivier-san, I feel that the grey cloud that had been covering up the sky is slowly scattering, letting the sun shine. I’ve come to understand that this is something that I must do while I live because I was more or less blessed with power far greater than other people, I’ve found the right opportunity to put it to good use. I will exhaust every last bit of my life on the line and slay every last devil that tries to ill this world.”

I can sense the restlessness in her nature. Christina-san really does intend to follow her words and is willing to battle Georg to the death. Needless to say, desperation will one day turn into despair, right now Christina-san might have no intention of throwing her life away. This situation is reminiscent with working with fragile glass, even the slightest mistake can turn into a big deal and shatter everything. Thinking about the possibility of Christina-san’s life being in danger, the atmosphere grew gloomy and everyone averted their eyes.

“Christina, my noble-lady’s gloomy mindset remained unchanged even after enrolled in the magic academy. I am not worthy of being called your teacher, my lady, the most I can do will be simply showing you which road to take, but even that still cannot be realized, there’s nothing else I can do but to curse my inabilities.

Your face seems to be a lot more bright and cheerful compared to yesterday.”

While the teacher tried her best to give her student guidance, Olivier, as the teacher, raises her beautiful eyebrows in pain for being unable to give her student proper directions. Seeing Christina-san and Olivier in this state, I simply don’t know what say. Then Olivier turns her gaze and looks at me. *I wonder what she will request of me to do for Christina-san.*

“Dran of Bern, it seems that thanks to you, Christina looks much happier compared to the one in my memory. First, I would like to offer my thanks. I’ve heard quite a few things about you from Denzel. You chose to ignore the offer, but otherwise you could have taken the entrance exam and attended school since long ago. I look forward toward the time when we will be acquainted.”

Olivier spoke of Denzel who is Risha and Airi’s uncle, he is also the one who had inherited talent in magic from the Old Witch, he had a successful life in Bern and he excelled in classes in Galious even during his teenage years. Two times a year, he would come back to Bern and visit while bringing lots and lots of souvenirs, and once the Old Witch introduced me to Denzel-san and I became his acquaintance, and every time we meet?, the entrance exam would be offered to me. Denzel-san had already been working at Galious for nearly two

decades, and judging from Olivier's tone as the school's director, Olivier most likely wanted to judge my ability in person, one needs to observe her closely to see through her personality.

"Denzel-san went through great trouble to offer me the opportunity, but I decided to reject his offer time and time again, for that, I am sorry. Is Denzel-san doing well?"

"Ah yes, he is an individual who is very eager to teach. Also, he gets very heated up whenever it comes to researching a topic or idea. However, Maguru-dono* predicted that he will live his life as an unmarried man, and that seems to be the only pressing matter." (T.L. The Old Witch's name.)

"Well, Denzel-san isn't the only child Maguru-basan had in her marriage, it can't be helped that he doesn't concern himself with such matters…."

"What will happen, will happen. In any case, Dran, if you ever have a change of heart and want to enroll into the academy, feel free to visit Galois anytime. When that happens, Christina will surely be in delight, and I, as her teacher, will be very happy for her."

I will have to think about it more carefully, this isn't something I want to answer in a breeze. The topic concerning me entering the same academy Christina is enrolling at, I was interested during the conversation but I didn't show that I was.

Is being more acquainted with the academy really a good thing? Christina-san is probably not someone who concerns too much at the academy. Olivier, well, I will need more breathing space to answer that after all.

As Olivier steps away from us, a figure of a person behind her who had waited to talk to us is revealed. I think that was very rude of me, I spoke with Olivier while oblivious to Diadora who was waiting. Conversing with Diadora yesterday seems to have had some effect, the atmosphere around her today seems peaceful. Last night, I healed the wound she received from Rafflesia with my power, now she's in perfect condition.

"Good morning, Dran, Christina, and Selia. Your effort in battle yesterday was plenty enough, I will head into battle myself so you don't have to accompany us."

She speaks bluntly, I can't tell whether or not there are feelings of care in Diadora's words.

"That's cold of you. This fight had become my fight as well, the condition yesterday was favorable, yes, but we did do all the preparations to be going after one another's throat.

Diadora is going to take on Rafflesia alone, so then we will take care of the other matters up to the point when you succeed."

"Unfortunately, my head is only filled with the urge for vengeance. I decided to think about living after taking my revenge first. You, of all people, should value your life above all.

For us who live in this forest, risking our life is a natural thing to do, but those that don't belong here do not need to do the same."

“I’m glad you are worrying about us. Diadora is very affectionate. However, as long as the devils exist in this world, all those who live in it are in danger. Thus, I cannot let those who live here be the only victim of bloodshed.”

“At this time, nothing will change no matter what I say. It’s not like your reason to fight is lacking. However, make your survival the priority.”

“Indeed. Life is a precious thing.”

Really, I was able to to understand it after I passed away living as a dragon, understanding the weight of life from the perspective of a human being.

While Diadora finished what she wanted to say, I call out to Christina-san and Selia, and we being to exchange a few words. Finishing up the chat with those two, I look up to observe. There are roughly 200 Wood Elves, 150 Wolves-men, 100 Arachne, and about one-hundred warriors from other races present in this place.

Even though they had suffered considerable casualties fighting against the devils up till now, this is still only a small part of Ente, where do all these people live.

The number would be even greater if I was to factor the non-fighters into account. The Wood Elves dress in the same scheme as Gio, equipped with hardened armor made of plants, most have a bow and arrows on their back, a sword at their waist and are holding a short spear in one hand, while some don’t.

All of the Wolf-men have similar strong physical appearances, they are all either one or two heads taller than I am, they are covered in tough fur above tallow skin and these two factors make for an outstanding natural armor against weapons, thus they only wear simple and lightweight protective gear on their arms and legs and no other type of armor anywhere. Wearing minimal gear means that they can be more agile with their movements which most of the time can be used in dodging, leaping, redirecting attack, changing directions and/or gaining the upper hand even against the greatest of weapons. For those who rely on mobility, armor is useless and causes more harm than good. So instead of that, they applied magical painted patterns onto their fur, magical charm placed on bird feathers, wearing ornaments made of minerals on their wrists, waists, and or necks.

And then the one-hundred Arachne also have painted patterns, similar to the Wolves-men, on their giant spider lower body, while their beautiful upper body are clad in the same type of armor similar to the Wood Elves. The Arachne’s ancestral origin was a female similar to that of the Lamia, and coincidentally enough, both race consists of only women. They also require to mate with a male from a different race to survive, it was also said that their ancestor’s first partner was a man from the human race.

Rumour has it that their speed and agility both greatly exceeds the Wolves-men, their fine body hair can also detect their enemy’s movement through the faint movement of air flow, and their eight eyes cover almost every direction, overall, their combat capability is very high. And again, similar to the Lamia, they too inherited the same curse their ancestor had into their soul, due to that, they naturally have high aptitude as witches, each individual is a very strong caster*. The tip of their individual spider leg is like a well pointed spear and is sharp

like a blade, in addition, they also carry swords, spears, and staffs that serves as a magic catalyst. (T.L. Literally “Magic Soldier”)

The time to fight the dreadful devils approaches, there are great tension within the rank consisting of different races, the three elders show themselves and look over their soldiers, the place turns from fairly noisy to dead quiet and the only sound one can possibly hear is the sound of the wind blowing the leaves on the trees branches. Out of the three, the first one to speak up is none other than Deo. While the Wood Elves look at their patriarch in silence, the majestic-like voice roars, full of vigor, shaking the open space and echoing off of the trees.

“Warriors, those who live in the blessed forest Ente. Ever since those abominations set their foot onto the land, many of our brethren had fallen to their poison fangs, we will take back our home, our beloved forest, the forest screams as they continue to sacrilege it.

I will not forget their grief. I will not forget their anger. I will not forget their hatred. My brethren, now is the time to discard your fear of death, and now, we will hammer our anger out on the enemy!”

Excluding us, the Wood Elves and the Wolvemen warriors respond to Deo’s speech by raising their hands high, roaring and cheering. The sound echos to every corner in Sai-West, the battle cry was so inspiring that it shakes the trees’ souls to the core. To drive away the foul souls that are invading the land and their unreplaceable homes, that roar belongs to those who are risking everything to fight.

This battle is also for every tree and flower in this forest. Going by the information from the wind, located in the north seems to be the main gate, and that there are three auxiliary gates which are located in the south. Our forces will move as one toward the three gates before going north, then we will separate into three groups, and each will be responsible to take down their designated gate, all simultaneously. Capturing the three gates separately and then merging into one for the main gate, this is the safest and best defensive strategy we can use with the highest probability of success.

As we move closer to the demonified forest, we lose the benefits we would otherwise enjoy from the normal forest, but in order to get to those gates, we have to travel through the miasma and avoid as much of it as possible, the plan is as such. As we are advancing through the forest, everyone pays close attention to the surrounding and we are constantly communicating with one another. I follow behind the group of Wolf-men leading in the front. Gio is in command of a separate group of Wood Elves, with Fio accompanying him.

Then, our main force divides into three, Olivier would take charge of one group as she is someone who has the most experience, another would be the strongest Flower Spirit, Diadora, and then us who unexpectedly fall into the reinforcement group, approximately 180 warriors are allocated equally into each groups. We then proceed through the thick forest, the trees voluntarily move left and right, creating an easy path to travel. Since we are in a place which is vulnerable to ambushes, the trees would give us warnings before one was to happen. The enemy forces easily outnumbers us two or even three to one, but nevertheless, I predict that we will win. There are beings inside this forest who will limit the scope of that prediction however.

The problem lies in Georg, Geren, Georudo, and last but not least, Rafflesia, these four. Each of these individuals has the strength to match a thousand men. Here lies one of those four, and one would fall victim to them if they go at it recklessly. Using my dragon's perception ability, I can immediately grasp the enemies' movement and discern that they knew what we are up to, the four of them, including Georg, had moved into their battle line up to defend their specific gate. I, Diadora, and Christina-san would fight them one-on-one and face our force with victory in hand, although Olivier had gone off with an unknown number, we will take victory against the greater enemy.

Sure enough, the miasma had spread, the forest's lush green colour landscape quickly ends and we see the deformed forest, some places are red and black, some are purple and blue, while at some other places it would be bright yellow, the colours are in complete chaos. The leaves on the tree branches had overgrown, and withered dry, while some would make a sound of scorching flesh bubbles *gujuguju*, every tree seems to all display the agony of death, as they drip out rotten and sticky residue out of their trunk. These are just a few examples of this wretched place, the forest's soil, vegetations, air, the Wood Elves must have suffered greatly for having high affinity with nature, I walk close to Fio whose face had turned pale ever since she first saw it.

"Fio-chan, are you alright? Do you want to stop briefly and rest?"

Fio trembles and hunches over, Selia gives a deep concerning look, Fio continues to tremble as she reaches for the inside of her small bag on her waist and take out a light pink coloured leaf, then she puts it inside her mouth and starts chewing on it. Turning my head and looking at the other Wood Elves, they all seem to have the same kind of medical plant leaf in their mouth, that seems to help them purify the effects of the miasma. They might contain some factor of tonic restoratives. Fio soon regains her complexion, and the trembling of her body subsides.

"…..Yes, I'm alright now. Hah, I did not think that it would be this painful, and we still have a fair way to go into the denser area, will it be spreading out across the entire forest?

More or less this sound absurd but, we cannot fail in defeating those guys. It must be done not only for those who died but also for those who will live here in the future."

Fio has the same mindset as most of the warriors here, and they are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and come at the devils. I will have to prove myself in battle and respond to their feelings. After seeing the determination in Fio's eyes, Selia holds in a small breath.

Leaving Fio's innocent face aside, at this time, a tremendous feeling of dread is fast approaching. It does not matter if you are young or old, man or woman. Here and now, you stand as a warrior who had decided to put all else on the balance to fight for your hometown and your compatriots.

"Fio-chan…."

Selia could not say no to Fio's resolution, thus she yields. I watch as the demonic soldiers, clad in the miasma, rapidly advancing to our position. They number in the 200 range. Since we didn't fully part ways, there are two groups present, and that means we are at no disadvantage in number. Perhaps they are mere scouts sent to check the movements of our

forces. With the enemies in sight, all of the Wolf-men's fur stands up simultaneously, their beastly bodies immediately prepare for combat.

Our Arachne and Wood Elves in the rear also stand to each other's shoulders*, their minds are concentrating and readying to unleash their magic. We had already tread inside the territory of the devils, it is no longer possible for us to receive the help of the healthy forest. Our magic caster composition seems to have no difficulty casting their magic and it seems their preparations were finished, the first attack went to the Arachne and the Wood Elves, using magic. Then follows the second attack wave, which involves using bows and arrows to down as many enemies as possible, then finally it would be close quarter combat which is where the Wolf-men will join the fray. Then show up the appearance of eight figures in a line, each with the width of a wagon, they are the Gafunu and on top of them are the demonic soldiers. This seemingly creates an image like man and horse united. Then comes the appearance of the Zarutsu, whom possesses immense strength, mixed with the horde of Zeruto, whom possesses extremely sharp claws. (T.L. This basically means they stand in a line.)

With the Gafunu moving like a single living animal, they aim to destroy our ranks by ramming it, their intention is to have a skirmish with the Zarutsu and Zeruto. However, our group of casters will not let them through easily. But since the devils' defensive and offensive attributes has risen due to the miasma, this branch of our forces could not stop them using only bow and arrows on top of magic.

At this rate, the the casters' magic will deplete, it will cause a dramatic change in the flow of battle if that happens. I, Christina, Selia, and Fio start casting our magic at the same time.

In my mind, I imagine a dozen spears of light raining down from the sky above, the spears mercilessly go through enemy's vanguards. Within the area of this demonified forest, the types of spiritual magic and holy magic associating with the Gods are very useful. One's magical power must be appropriate to that type of magic in order to use it.

"Obey me Light, the same Light that illuminated the universe since the dawn of time, shape yourself into the spear that will shred my enemy to pieces, 「Celestial Javelin」!!"

For an instant, the light over our heads becomes dim and darkness spreads, then a huge spear of light forms, bigger than the dozen of spears I made earlier put together. Imagine focusing light that had appeared since the beginning of the world, a vast amount of my magical power was mixed with that light and so its effect intensifies, radiating extreme heat, this spear was made to burn the opposition to nothingness, physically and spiritually. All living things will be blinded if they were to look at the 「Celestial Javelin」's downpouring light directly, I move the spear, and in a flash, the Gafunu receives a direct hit.

Georg and Georudo combines their effort and skews the gigantic spear made of light, the Gafunu that could not tolerate the heat and magic were disintegrated without a trace, while some Gafunu ran in random directions while burning to death. It was already too late for them to run, I subsequently crash the spear of light and skew it into the burning ground. By the time the Celestial Javelin was extinguished, seven of the Gafunu have been destroyed, leaving one remaining, with only one Gafunu and a bunch of demonic soldiers, the caster division should have no problem clearing them out.

Other magic was used too, including Christina-san's magic that rains down onto the demonic soldiers, stopping their advance. She used sharpened wind blades, a gigantic hammer that crashes onto the earth, and a downpour of thundering arrows from the sky. Casting so many magics of that level in quick succession, there might not even be a forest to save afterward.

Despite being severely wounded, the demonic soldiers seem to be able to maintain their existence, that is until a sinister figure appears and wipes them out without a trace. When the final piece of magic had finish preparing, the remaining devils coming at us are all erased. I used more power than I had originally planned, I suppose the magic I used was a little too potent, but if I hadn't used it then the battle against Georg leading the enemy would not have end, anxiety builds up in my chest. It is natural to demonstrate aggression towards your sworn enemy, but requires sufficient power to do so. For those who are beginners, this might be the first time they engaged in actual combat, thinking like this might not be a bit unreasonable, however, they are jeopardizing their life nevertheless.

"It's difficult but I'm alright."

Fio speaks, pretending to be tough, as the Wolf-men warriors are readying their poised weapon and are about to assault the enemy's line, I say the same thing in a small voice. We will have to disappoint the demonic soldiers who may feel relief, this is also to encourage ourselves, boosting our fighting spirit for the future battles as well. Comparing our forces to the devils', there is no way we'll lose this one. This battle is ours, they are telling themselves.

♦ ♦ ♦

After the forces at Sai-West drove away the devils' army, shortly after it was decided that they will be dividing into three forces, each would go and destroy one of the three lesser gates connecting the two realms, traveling through the demonified forest. After guessing that the people in Sai-West will be divided into three groups, the devils had set up defenses around the gates, their forces are concentrated and are in perfect formation awaiting the enemy. Consisting in the group here are flower spirits, and Dryades, leading them in the front is none other than The Spirit of the Black Rose, Diadora.

Dran, using his power, had completely healed the wound Rafflesia dealt on Diadora, the closer she approaches her enemy, the more bitter she grows, naturally, the place they are heading towards is filled with demonic miasma, but the group advances through it without stopping. With her whole body wrapping in thick and highly viscous jet-black magic, everyone who follows behind subsequently does the same, and they enter the the dreadful air. Entering even deeper inside this demonic forest, if some form of defense is not put into place, one way or another, one's mind and body would deteriorate in the thick mass of miasma.

However, this is the proof that they are heading towards their target of destruction, the demonic gate. There are voices howling in the wind in this forest, already there is no hope of receiving blessing from the normal forest. As they draw deeper into the alien environment, they knew fully well that Georg along with the rest of the devils grew stronger. While this is unfavorable, that alone does not permit Diadora to falter. Above all, the thought of burning the sinners in Hell's blazing flame burns in Diadora's chest, and it won't fade until they are all dead.

Suddenly, Diadora recalls the interaction with Dran last night. How he treated the wound Rafflesia inflicted on her, how he affirmed Diadora to take her revenge, and the fact that he is a human(?) male. Even though she wants to extract revenge on her foes and think about all else afterwards, why is it in this situation, Diadora vividly calls out to Dran inside her heart.

“Oh well, you said that living is good. But above all else, unless I repay that woman the favor, I will not stop my advance.”

Shortly after, Diadora halts as a certain someone shows their appearance. Arriving in front of Diadora’s eyes out of the gap in the deformed forest, Rafflesia shows up along with several hundred minions. Overnight, Rafflesia had sharpened her hatred for Dran and Diadora

and now it is covering her entire body, and Diadora senses her ill intention from every direction. The corner of Rafflesia’s mouth unexpectedly curls up. Smiling. Innocent and pure, however, behind that mask hid her wicked intention.

“It has been one night, Black Rose spirit. That human man isn’t with you today. What a shame, I wanted him to accompany you and offer you both my uttermost hospitality.”

“Dran would have turned your nakama into ashes by now. Since you have gone through *great* pain in offering your hospitality, allow me to accompany you.

Ara, the scratch on your cheek had yet to heal. Its lovely, very fitting for you. Since it’s like that, I’ll put *a lot* more scratches onto your lovely face.”

Zawat, the wind between the two starts to turn freezing cold. Diadora and Rafflesia raise their magical power to the max and while screaming like hungry beasts, they fire their power at each other.

“Yaaa, garhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!”

Jet black roses collide with life sucking demonic flowers, their hatred unleashes without restraint.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 12]

-Dragon's Soul in Human Flesh-

"I've waited in pain for the moment where I take your life-desu. Any unwanted nuisance now would ruin the moment."

Rafflesia, straightening her left arm with her hand fully spread out, turns her open palm upward parallel to the ground. Then, centering Rafflesia and Diadora, a wall made out of countless entangled demonic flower roots start to emerge from the ground, enclosing on the two. The wall that had just been created is just like the wall composed of trees that is protecting Sai-West, the appearance of the structure made out of flowers resembles that of a colosseum.

"So then, with this, let us focus our minds and fight to our hearts content-desu? Hey you, if you have any concerns, hurry up and speak them out to me."

"Oh well. It's a shame, but from the looks of it, the others won't be able to witness your unsightly death, Miss."

"Ahahaha~, so rude, those words of yours."

"Fufufu~"

Diadora and Rafflesia's blood thirst confronts one another with the same magnitude. Rafflesia lets out a cheerful laughter while feeling annoyed, then extending both of her hands out, in a downward motion, she lowers them at Diadora. Rafflesia did it in a fluid manner, her wax-like arms* start to produce some kind of blue foggy mist in the air and it makes its way through the air and approaches Diadora at a frightening speed. Be it wind, earth, or water, anything that is a part of nature, no matter what it is, Rafflesia's menacing fog would drain its life and absorb it as food continuously. (T.L. Literally, Rafflesia, the plant, have waxy petals so Rafflesia, the character, have waxy arms.)

With her vision mostly clouded in blue and the life draining fog rapidly approaching, Diadora moves the black rose petals from her left side to the front, thus successfully scatters and prevents the fog from getting near her. Diadora's action allows her to avoid getting into a desperate situation. In the next moment, however, the black rose's petals start to sway and wobble. This proves that even tens of thousands of petals are nothing more than just one petal before the fog. It is insane.

After realizing this fact, the petals move away from the blue fog allowing it to continue on its path. Diadora tries to do something foolish compared to before. With her slender right hand, she connects all of the petals in the air together and controls them to twist and turns in a fluid motion as if ignoring the wind and defying gravity. She then proceeds to direct her attack at Rafflesia.

Naturally, the accursed fog that could reap all things in nature of its life intervenes. It sucks out all of the vitality and magical power contained within the black rose petals until nothing is left. Everything was turned into fine dust in under a minute.

The tempest of flower petals splits into two and the wind carries away the dust left behind. Diadora continues to pour more and more magical power into the petals. The rate of which the petals are being created soon exceeds the amount the fog can handle and overtakes it. After three odd seconds, it manages to reach Rafflesia's location and swallows her small figure, containing a wicked soul, within.

"Hee~, so this right here is a petals tempest."

Rafflesia murmurs amusingly, then thrusts out her left hand. At that moment, the fog starts to gush out in a torrent against the petals surrounding it and like a starving animal, starts to devour Black Rose's petals.

"You're still thinking of fighting against me using sheer number? I've learned a few things since our battle yesterday."

Sneering at her opponent's shallow thinking, Rafflesia then lets out a laughter like a ringing bell. Diadora, on the other hand, remains silent. Seeing the petals' dust blowing away, she gazes at Rafflesia with extreme sharpness.

"I suppose I should reward you a little. I'll let you into a little something. My fog, absorbing life isn't the only thing it can do, it has other usage as well. One of which, is like this."

Rafflesia turns her right hand up as she speaks. The blue fog starts to swirl and as it thickens, the blue-colored fog starts to change into red. Diadora's sharp perception allows her to quickly feel the enormous amount of power that is starting to swell up. In addition to understanding what kind of power is gathering in Rafflesia's right palm, hatred begins to show on her snow white facial skin. In this time, Diadora's deep rage for Rafflesia comes gushing out.

"You bitch, that's the accumulated life force from everyone you've absorbed, isn't it?"

In reply to Diadora's words spitting out from her blood red lips, Rafflesia gives her an applause by somewhat clapping her hands.

"Cor~rect~. I can utilize the life I've absorbed just like this, it can be release outside like this here, see?

The soul in this world holds a lot of power as it is the source for life. If you have enough power, you can break it and then alter it as you wish, I'll show it to you right now."

Rafflesia tosses the orb in her right hand up in the air toward Diadora. The orb is now a red crystallized orb supplied with life force, it then emits light in every direction including towards Diadora. An enormous amount of power is emitting from the orb toward the surroundings in the form of light. Diadora's jet black hair grows long into black rose thorns, intertwines, and curls up like a boulder in an instant, and thus she successfully avoids direct

exposure. The instant the orb hits the ground where Diadora is standing, the sound like that of a hundred thunderous roars explodes and it leaves a gigantic hole in the earth afterward.

Then, a fragment of the cocoon-like barrier breaks off and bounces on the ground. Diadora immediately gets a glimpse of Rafflesia. The ground then starts to move apart. Despite the fact that Diadora poured all her might into defense, she still could not fully negate the attack's destructive power. Rafflesia, in a cute manner, speaks to confirm Diadora's words.

"How was it? It was amazing from over here. Just now was the combined power of your deceased friends.

If your friends' lives were so important, shouldn't you have accepted the power of their lives? Oh well~ let's continue!"

"Tsk!"

Rafflesia raises her small hands up to her chest level, then the red light representing many lives starts to gather into orbs between her hands. Each of them possesses amazingly destructive power equaling high level destruction magic. Even Diadora will be finished if she was to receive one direct attack.

From between Rafflesia's hands, the light emitting red orbs once again fire at Diadora. Flying through the air, passing, intersecting, each of the light orbs performs complex maneuvers as if it has a mind of its own while closing in on Diadora from every direction.

Diadora quickly glances around her. She instantly realizes that there is nowhere to run so she bundles the thorns and whips them against the light orbs to create her own escape. But even so, one of the light orbs penetrates her defense and manages to get very close. The thorns are filled with the Spirit of the Black Rose's magical power, thus they can easily penetrate a thick fortress gate even with steel reinforcement. The moment it makes contact with the orbs, the thorns' tips whip at the orbs and flick them away.

The thorns send the orbs flying and disrupt the enemy's control over them. It was successful and Diadora experienced no pain, only the shockwave from the collisions with the orb that got through and powerlessly reached Diadora's cheeks.

"Oh? You were able to play with something of that level. How about it? Let's go at it one more time, but don't be selfish and die alright?

It would be boring if you were to give up and die. Oh well, let's first do something about those long legs of yours, halving them sounds good. Alright, let's do that!"

"Stop blabbering at other people's business at your own leisure!"

In no time at all, Diadora once again is surrounded by a great number of light orbs. Then Diadora makes a little gesture, lifting her left index and middle finger up. Although she does it hidden from Rafflesia's sight, by feeling the ground vibrating below her feet, Rafflesia already guesses what Diadora is scheming, and looks down at her feet and waits.

A small rustling sound can be heard from the ground that is cracking. Ten or so thorn tips pierce out of the crack and skew into Rafflesia's entire body countless times. Rafflesia glances toward Diadora's direction for a brief second and notices that the thorns made their way over here from a small strand of Diadora's jet black hair via underground. Black Rose's thorns grew unnoticed and spread wide below the surface, and it was only just now that it became a threat.

"Letting a portion of your life out in the open, did you perhaps think that I can't absorb this? Too bad for you~!"

Besides Black Rose's usage of skewing and locking down a single target, she could also have used it to annihilate an army of thousands. Regardless, Rafflesia then starts cladding her body in life-absorbing blue fog and one by one, the thorns start to turn into dust and leave behind no trace of a wound on Rafflesia's skin. When everything crumbled and turned into dust, Rafflesia lets out a satisfactory laughter for all to hear, and speaks to Diadora in a mocking manner.

"Ohh, how unfortunate for you.The prideful woman played out her attack and it had no significant effect~"

Regarding the light orbs that are surrounding Diadora, countless thorns come out of the ground and pierce all of them, then they stop and fade away into thin air. When the light orbs are hit, they release shockwaves and Diadora, in turn, overlaps the thorns in layers like a shield to protect herself from them. At first, Diadora used them to inflict damage onto Rafflesia and now, she uses them to get rid of the light orbs that surrounded her.

"Did you think doing something like that will prolong your life?

All it did was prolonging your suffering. It is such a nuisance for me, I wish for you to feel and suffer all of the agony I can cause you, but it is not so tempting if you keep dodging."

Rafflesia once again condenses the stolen life force, forming numerous red orbs. They surround Rafflesia while radiating sinister red light. Then, rays of light shine and the wind starts blowing. The life sucking fog brushes against the miasma and erodes it away. The light orbs give off pulses like a beating heart and each time the orbs' size would slightly increase along with their power.

To the extent of turning even one's own territory into power by destroying it, such an abomination.

While witnessing what Rafflesia is doing, Diadora's rage and hatred seems to increase even more as she thinks to herself. Averting her eyes away from the atrocity, she hears something unexpected.

"First, to prevent you from moving around, your legs need to be slice off. Next, ripping off your arms and making you crawl on the ground like a worm. Afterward, I'll personally raise you and give you lots of love~. You'll be my plaything, until I grow bored of you that is."

Rafflesia then commands all of the orbs that are surrounding her like wandering spirits to all attack Diadora simultaneously. Every time an orb is destroyed, Rafflesia would create

another in its place, the constant barrage between Diadora and Rafflesia raging on non-stop. After a while, the thorns could no long hold against the heavy bombardment. Some of the attacks get through and graze by Diadora's head and beautiful body.

"If you start begging me me to make you into my plaything now, I will reject the idea. Rest assured. I will not treat you as my plaything, and I'll destroy you at once."

One of the light orbs suddenly slips through and approaches Diadora with insane speed, but a dark aura suddenly covers her entire body. It is something that seems to suck in all light. It is such a darkness that would never allow even light to escape. No, rather than calling it darkness, it is more accurate to describes it as black light.

The aura surrounds Diadora like a thick layer of clay. As the orbs touching the aura are quickly swallow by it, the red orbs controlled by Rafflesia quickly turn into the black color of Diadora. One by one, the red light orbs are taken over and start to surround Diadora, Rafflesia wipes the sneer off her face after seeing what Diadora is doing.

"Oh, you are being such an annoyance for me. What more? You, are you the same as me in this world?"

"Black is the colour that absorb all others. Black is also the color of all things mixed. As the rose that carries black petals, I am one who possess every colour, Demonic Flower Spirit. With the exception to myself, I can devour anyone, demonic flower spirit. I sealed away my power when I started to live within this forest, since I didn't want to do anything as evil as you did, beside, you don't have to feel so annoyed about it.

The life of everyone that you absorbed, for letting me take them back from your filthy life, you have my thanks."

"Ahahaha, you don't say. If it is about sucking out the life of the enemy, let us go about it then. However, the winner will be me~!"

Rafflesia took it upon herself and challenged Diadora. She stops using the destructive side of her power and once again clad her small body in her blue fog. Diadora too starts to emit black light. Her body is covered in her black aura just like Rafflesia. The contest of life-sucking begins as the light and fog collide with one another. Like hungry and mindless beasts, their powers indiscriminately exhaust all source of power they touch. When they mash up against each other, the blue fog engulfs the black light and drains it of its energy, and vice versa for the black light. The colour of black and blue mix together, devouring one another violently.

The battle between Diadora and Rafflesia is literally about who can suck their enemy's life out faster all the while exchanging their own life. Blue fog and black light constantly switch from offense to defense and in the process, cause the surroundings to glow bizarrely. The surrounding earth, air, and also the magical power that dwelled in space itself, the aether, starts to clear up as the struggle rages on. The two's battle is one that is consuming creation itself. Mutual robbing and exchanging life, although it has only been a little while since the start, the first one to fall to her knees is Diadora.

There is a definite difference in power between one who came from Hell and one who lives in this world. The speed at which the fog is taking over the black light increases. The bizarre

mix of color slowly turns more blue. Once the enemy collapsed, the victor was already decided.

Rafflesia lets out a sadistic smile and shows her superiority. The blue fog covers Diadora's black light and consumes it completely. When it is all gone, the fog encircles Diadora on all sides. While the blue fog continue to such the life out of anything it touches, Diadora can only emit enough aura around herself to resist. Rafflesia then lets out a sigh.

"Hmmm. It wasn't enough to even leave a deep taste behind. You no longer have the power to fight back either. The small fries you brought along are having their hands full dealing with my minions. They don't seem to be able to afford a single second to help you, alright!

After I chop off your arms and feet, I'll make you watch as I break the others one by one.

Fufufu, I'd love to see the lovely expression on your face.

Fufu, fufufu, it'll be a lovely sight."

Rafflesia let out a blissful expression as she imagines what it would be like which enrages Diadora. She shoots out a black light beam and slowly opens her mouth to speak. The words that come out of her glossy red lips are in an indifferent tone. It was neither an angered nor frightened tone. It's rather one that struck a nerve against Rafflesia.

"After absorbing so much of my power, I wonder why are you not full yet?"

"Fufu, so I am not. Of all the life force I sucked out from the flowers in this forest, yours is the most delicious while also carries the most hatred. It truly was very delicious. It may be better to let you live and serve as my treat, fufufufu."

"So, it seems to fancy your taste. I suggest you savior that taste to the fullest because it will be the last thing you'll taste in this life."

"Ara, is there something funny going on inside your head? I'm rather curious to see how you're going to win given the situation.

Surely you are not thinking of someone coming to rescue you? Perhaps you are expecting too much from that man who was being a nuisance yesterday.

Don't worry, I'll give you and that human plenty of love after this. Feel free to look forward to it."

Suddenly, Diadora lets out a small laugh and puts her finger onto her cheek. Last night, that place on Rafflesia's cheek was where she was scratched.

"Dran is not someone as simple as you might think.

Right here. Aren't you feeling something uncomfortable on your cheek?"

Pointed out by Diadora, Rafflesia then touches her right cheek where the scar has been with her right hand. From the moment she started to sucked Diadora's life, the skin on her right

cheek started to tingle and itch. The discomfort intensifies as soon as Diadora points that out. It now feels like there are insects crawling underneath her skin, her expression then switches to that of disgust.

“What, what is this? Kii, kyaa, what, what is this pain!?”

While feeling the intense itching, throbbing, and the pain, Rafflesia instinctively covers her right cheek with both hands. Noises underneath her skin could be heard. Countless tiny thorns start to puncture and grow out of Rafflesia’s skin and spread all over her cheek. The thorns are wet with Rafflesia’s black blood. Moreover, the black rose thorns are sucking her blood. Surely enough, the black rose is one that swallows all color.

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!”

Rafflesia tries to grab hold of the black rose thorns coming out of her face and rips them out. That is when the thorns continue to grow in number and skewer her hand as well. Sucking even more blood from the new wound, the thorns leave behind roots inside the wound, tearing away the flesh, growing into Rafflesia’s blood vessels and literally devouring her alive.

Growing without limits, the moist black rose thorns continue to grow out of Rafflesia while intensely sipping away her life. Within seconds, Rafflesia is weakened considerably. The thorns then find their way into her right eye socket, down her throat, and up her nostrils. The roots then puncture and come out of her ear and cover her earlobe, Rafflesia’s entire head is now covered in black rose’s thorns and roots.

“What, di…you, to me….thorns, inside my body, roses, growing….How!?”

“During the fight yesterday, don’t you remember being scratched by me? In that nick of time, I embedded a small black rose seed into your skin. I couldn’t reach you from the outside, so I intended to attack from within.”

Rafflesia’s white neck is punctured from the inside. Her thin thighs grow bulky and then finally rupture. In no time, Black Rose’s thorns completely cover Rafflesia’s entire body. The human shaped artwork made out of thorns is completed. One can even say that she is full of holes for that would be the literal truth. Rafflesia’s once beautiful body was completely tainted. Her voice could barely be made out due to the agony. Besides, her mouth was already filled with thorns which pierced through her tongue countless times over, forcing out even more blood.

“Such, defeated by, such method, I did not notice….”

“How rare to see you being honest. Your confidence seems to have disappeared. Although it worked because of your excellent job of absorbing my magic power and life force, you know. After all, the most nutritious thing for my seed is my own magic and life force. Would you look at that, the thorns are making their way into your heart. Your power will soon be sucked dry and give the rose the power to fully bloom. Let your life at least be of value to the Black Rose, this is for everything you’ve made the people of the forest gone through. Now, return their lives.”

“Ahh!! No, no, no…..! I, I’m the one who take lives, I’m the Flower Princess….! My……ah…..ah, ahh, ahhhh, my life, life, ahhhhhhhhhhhhh……..aaaa…..aa….”

Rafflesia screamed until the last moment when her final drop of life got drained, her head lost its power and swayed sideways. The screams continue, but in a form of noises, but that too would cease soon enough. In the end, Black Rose will take all of Rafflesia’s power. From the countless thorns sticking out from Rafflesia’s body, the roses start to bloom. The figure now barely resembling that of a human’s.

At last, after everything was over, Diadora falls down on her knees. She pretended to be calm while Rafflesia was still alive, but the truth was that she severely overworked herself, the amount of life force required for the seed to grow from within Rafflesia’s body was nothing to laugh at. Thus, Diadora’s mind and body are now completely exhausted. There is always power present in the earth and the air, and although absorbing them can help one recover strength, it is not possible for her in this state due to the surrounding being filled with demonic energy.

For Rafflesia who is from the other world, absorbing the energy familiar to her here is not a problem. The unmistakable truth is, for Diadora who is a Flower Spirit of this world, being in this place is like sipping in poison. Thus, when Diadora is in the affected area, she has to clad herself in her own power. Her physical strength is recovering slowly. In the current situation, a full recovery will be a long and unsteady process. Suddenly, Diadora starts to have cold sweat flowing down her white chin and drops onto her long black hair. Her breathing also changes to a rougher state. She tries hard to maintain her breathing, but it doesn’t stop and she continues to breath air out roughly past her red lips.

She resists the urge to drop down and close her eyes. Diadora then looks at the wall made by the deceased Flower Spirit earlier. The wall stands even when its creator, Rafflesia, has died. The sound of Wood Elves fighting against the demonic soldiers could be heard through the wall. Since the supply of magical power from Rafflesia was cut off, it is not difficult to break through the wall made out of demonic flowers. Suffering from exhaustion, Diadora still requires sometime before she is able to gather enough strength to break through.

“So, I’m all wind up in exhaustion. Even the younglings and Woodmen would be able to defeat me in this state.”

Somehow, Diadora recovers just enough strength to joke around. When her trembling legs struggle to stand up straight, she suddenly senses a strong bloodthirst directed toward her. The bloodlust is so intense that it makes her feel like heavy rain is pouring down onto the ground.

While being hit by the intense bloodlust, Diadora ceases her movement and sweat starts to flow down her forehead. Looking up, Diadora spots the pupils like that of black agate. With its back against the sky while jumping over the wall from the other side, she spots the lower body that is of a beast along with its gigantic shadow. The figure’s beastly lower body doesn’t seem to have eyes, and its upper humanoid body is clad in armor covered in red blood like someone who had a sunburn. There’s no doubt, its Georudo.

“Nueeii!”

“Argh.”

Georudo utilizes the downward momentum and launches the gigantic spear in his right hand at Diadora. It flies down like a meteor. Diadora forces strength into her legs that refused to move and jumps aside. After rolling a few times, she manages to avoid being skewered and ultimately escapes death. Georudo’s weight is massive. His spear dug into the ground near Diadora and the area around it sunk in, causing a huge cloud of dust to raise.

Although Diadora avoided being skewered by the spear, she could not escape the shock wave that was created almost at point blank range. She was blown off into the air and after a few flips, she hits the ground with a concerning sound. Her cheeks are now very pale and there seems to be almost no blood in them at all. Her hair also seems to have lost its glossy blackness and turned dark. Her dress, which is made out of black rose petals and fibers, is covered in dirt. On Diadora’s red lips and also on her soft thigh, blood can be seen flowing out from the injured skin. These wounds are not fatal. However, all of the strength Diadora has recovered was used to avoid the blow, so she no longer possesses enough strength to resist the next time Georudo attacks.

Groveling still on the ground, Diadora musters all of her current strength and barely manages to look up. Georudo’s hatred seems to pierce right through her pupils as she looks at him. Georudo pulls his spear out of the ground nearby, temporarily shifts his gaze off of Diadora, and looks at the humanoid shaped black rose thorns. Rafflesia’s body outline can no longer be recognized but judging from the clothing in addition to the situation, he guesses that it’s Rafflesia.

“Urh….Why,… are you here? Aren’t you suppose to be guarding the other Hell gate?”

While coughing out fresh blood, Diadora asked. Georudo conceals his hatred and replies.

“Fun~, I certainly am. However, when I felt that Rafflesia and you were fighting, I came rushing over before Rafflesia could have her way with you.

That Dran, or whatever the name of the youngster was, did not come over to where I was. At first, I thought it was going to be a one sided bloodbath, but I didn’t think that you could have defeated Rafflesia.”

“Is that so. Unfortunately…..haa, haa, for you. Your precious nakama, ah, was defeated by me.”

“‘Precious nakama” you said? That’s an interesting way to put it. Regardless, make no mistake, I don’t feel a shred of emotion for such thing. Nun!!”

Georudo slowly raises the spear in his right hand up in the air and swings it down at wind breaking speed. However, his target is not Diadora, who is on the ground, but the corpse of Rafflesia who was buried in thorns, which causes Diadora to stare with eyes wide open. Georudo completely smashes Rafflesia along with the black roses. As they are crushed, the thorns burst and spill blood everywhere on the ground. It was an unforgivable cruelty to do such a thing to your deceased comrade’s body. Diadora, taken by surprise, can only stare at what happened. Georudo clicks his tongue and acts as if it was an insignificant thing.

“Chi, that ruined my mood.”

“Fu, fufu, crushing the body of a nakama who came from the same world, I like it?”

“Han~. Leaving behind the corpse that was easily defeated by someone from this world, it would shame all those who came from Hell. Such a thing should not be left alone. Crushing the corpse and remains of the fallen is the least I can do and it is similar to showing mercy from where we came from. You too should give it a good laugh. Laugh until you are no longer able to laugh.

Now, Rafflesia wished to have her way with you and get her revenge, but I’ll kill you right here, right now. After that, it’ll be that Dran-whatever’s turn.”

Pulling out the spear from the ground once again, Georudo raises the weapon which is covered with his nakama’s blood. Diadora still has not recovered enough strength yet and she does not have any means to evade, much less is she able to stop even a single strike from Georudo. The best she can do right now is to lightly move one of her limbs.

“Not yet, the forest still has not been retaken yet. I’m not going to….in such a place.”

Raise the body somehow, even one blow at Georudo will do, Diadora thought but her body refused to listen to her and remains still. Her hair wouldn’t turn into thorns, nor would the hidden thorns in the earth extend out.

“Die by my spear, Spirit of the Black Flower!”

Georudo swings down his spear with all his might, magical power and touki emitting out light similar to that of a flame. That attack packed enough destructive power to blow a small fortress into pieces. In Diadora’s case, she is going to be turned into tens of thousands of pieces of meat. She’s about to meet her demise and she would welcome death, or so she thought as she closed her eyes. Suddenly, from the sky, a shadowy figure with six expanded wings intervenes. It’s someone who possesses wings. It mutters something and takes on Georudo’s single attack with absolute ease.

“Fumu.”

“Nuu! You!!”

Georudo raised his voice with all sorts of mixed feelings from astonishment to hatred, and also joy.

“Dran!?”

Diadora, seeing the appearance of a man who should not have been in this place, instinctive cried out his name. Dran, who stopped Georudo’s spear using the sword he was holding only with his right hand, looks back at Diadora whom he rushed in between to protect then showed a smile on his face.

“You are in quite a bit of trouble, Diadora. Good thing I made it here in time. However, this is the second time that this happen isn’t it. What strange fate.”

“Why, why are you here? You should have been together with Christina and Selia.”

“I felt the presence of Georudo heading this way. Thus, I left that place to Christina-san, and headed over here. Everything was fine when I left the other battlefield, it’s quite fortunate that I made my way over here in time.”

After saying all of that, Dran strengthens his right arm even more using dragon’s power and pushes Georudo back with his sword in one go. Georudo’s spear is a dozen times heavier than even himself, and so against that kind of strength, Georudo can only hold on to his spear and be pushed back while digging his feet into the ground, carving lines on it.

“Nuuu, those wings and this power, those are not what a regular human possesses!”

“What, this body of mine is definitely human. However, it is an entirely different story when it’s about my soul. Devil.”

“Interesting. I’ll enjoy slicing your head from your body with my spear!”

With his will to fight starting to intensify along with him starting to put on his touki, before Georudo can actually materialize his deadly magical aura, Dran points his sword and lightly touches the ground with the sword’s tip to put a magical formation on top of it, and the area burst into the light of rainbow color. As soon as the magical formation gives off rainbow color light, it also releases magic that helps one replenish their magic along with healing them. Diadora’s body and soul instantly feel better and she feels her magic power replenishing in no time at all. All the small wounds she received also heal instantly. All the scratches and bruises that were once on Diadora’s body disappear as if they were all illusions. If a great sage who is familiar with the knowledge about dragons of ancient time was to stand before this place, that person would be in absolute shock witnessing the magical formation being used contained some of the dragon’s race alphabet that was once used when gods used to walk the earth.

“This formation will heal and protect you. Diadora, do not move out of this formation until I’ve finished sending Georudo to oblivion.”

“Wait, with this magic formation in place, I’ll be able to recover in no time. I’ll be able to offer you support when I do.”

“You’re still hurt, don’t overwork yourself anymore. Listen to me and behave yourself. Beside, I, alone, am enough.”

Dran goes out of the dragon based magic formation, leaving Diadora behind. Diadora quickly stands up and tries to chase after, but when she reaches out she finds herself behind an invisible barrier that prevents her from getting out. The formation was made so it will heal and protect Diadora while also prevent her from recklessly getting out.

“Dran!”

In response to Diadora’s calling, Dran flaps his six large wings lightly, and slowly heads toward Georudo.

♦ ♦ ♦

I did not look back when Diadora called my name. I got closer to Georudo step by step. Leaving Christina-san over at the other gate, it was a big favor to ask of her while I go to save Diadora. I recreated my wings from the memories in my soul, they grew out of my back and I flew all the way here in a breath. Currently, I have reduced the wings' size down to a more fitting proportion to my own body. At the same time, I strengthened my whole body, thus giving me dragon's level strength.

Strengthening my body is one thing, temporarily turning parts of my body into that of a dragon's, such as semi-recreating my eyes, is another matter entirely. Having said that, this is the first time I've grown my wings and fortunately, it went well. Although dragon wings have membrane between them, their overall skeletal structure greatly resembles that of a bird if you were to strip away all of their feathers and flesh. Each of my wing's membrane has its own color ranging from red, blue, yellow, green, purple, and finally black. Each of my wings is mostly covered in white but the overall color shines like a rainbow. Right now, it would not be an exaggeration to say that I resemble a dragon more than a human. *Ahh, father, mother, please forgive this son of yours for meddling with the body you've given him.*

"Ooh Dran. You've ruined my long awaited moment where I kill Spirit of the Black Rose with my spear, but it is more convenient this way, since I can kill both of you at once.

I will abide by the guidance of the God of Hell. This place is where I will kill you, I will be the one who will devour your soul. Gahahahahahaha!!"

"Abide by the guidance of the God. However…."

Who is the current High God of Evil? Should I fight and destroy them too? Rather than fighting, the evil deity would be extremely frightened and would probably start crying when facing me. Georudo did not hear my mutter and his entire body is now cladded in touki and abnormal magical power can be sensed in the mouth region of his beast underbody. It fires out hell blaze directly at me while taking into aim Diadora, who is behind me. The fireball with its size of twice my height starts to melt the ground. The heat it is giving off completely engulfs me. The fiery breath shines bright light onto my face and the heat makes me feel warm. I create a magical barrier just on top of my skin and it blocks off all the deadly heat from affecting my body.

"As expected, your fire is third-rate."

I swing my left hand to the side with five fingers spread out, scattering the enormous fireball into some ten of thousands of sparks in the process. This time, I semi-wrap my left arm in white and translucent dragon scales. Again, these scales were re-created using the same method so they are more or less a fake copy. Compare to the flames of someone who is highly ranked in terms of power and holds the fire attribute magic, the devil's hell blaze is nothing. These scales alone are plenty enough to block them.

While there are still countless sparks still in the air, Georudo seems to have expected that I would disperse the fireball beforehand, Georudo comes charging at me while dispersing the spark aside like a curtain with his spear and I, too, ready my sword to clash against his weapon. With each step he takes, the ground beneath his feet sinks, his entire body is covered

in his deep red touki making him look like he's on fire. The Vanguard of Hell freely treads on this earth while looking at me with eyes burning with killing intent, he pushes his spear forward toward me.

"Nuuueeeeiiiiyaaaaa!!!"

"Hah!"

My long sword, which I applied concentrated magic power onto, is shining white and I use it to receive the spear point dead on and force it backward. The loud sound of metal colliding with one another booms across the area. Sparks arc close to my hair at the same time making it look like thunder and lightning is being created in our fight. Georudo screams as he withstands the numbness that is running through his body. Even though it is very tricky to use four legs, he kicks his foot against the ground, which can create a shock wave enough to kill. Immediately, I deflect his spear downward and jump.

His spear swings down with great force. I use the opening to punch Georudo's beast body in the mouth with my left hand, throwing him off balance. My clenched fist, covered in copied dragon scales, punches deep into the mouth and breaks its fang. It then spits out dark blood. Just like that, I send Georudo's big bulky body flying. He crashes onto the ground while making a loud sound and due to his big body, he sinks into the ground.

"Guooo, ahh, ahh, gahhhhh. Kuh, hahahaha. This power, it's just like what Georg said, you are a dragon.

We had thought that you simply transformed and took the shape of a human, but that body is definitely that of a human's. Factoring that in, there are only so few possibility left, but I'll take a guess right now and say that you're someone who was reincarnated. Specifically, a dragon who was reborn as a human!

If that is true, then you possessing this much power is only fitting. I did not think I would be able to fight against a powerful dragon such as yourself while I was alive, Dran."

"It's as you said. So to say, a dragon in human flesh, that is what I am. Although, I did not originally wish to be reborn as a human."

"It's excellent either way!"

While getting up with his body, coughing out blood, Georudo intends to jump over to where I am with his touki still intact covering his dirty body. His legs possess plenty of jumping power and his gigantic body drags the wind as he easily jumps into the air. Furthermore, Georudo concentrates his magic power into his four legs and fires them out straight at me. It is the exact same thing Christina-san did when she used her wind magic to move. It resembles a technique used to fly through the air.

"That was the second time you've deflected my spear!!"

"Don't blame me, but your fate has been decided. Whatever scheme you're planning will not succeed, Devil!"

With every ounce of his magical power combined with his touki, Georudo wraps it onto his spear giving it, once again, the illusion of a burning flame. There's no doubt Georudo's is putting everything he has and entrusting his soul and body into this. I can clearly feel that this is the strongest attack he is capable of making. In response to him, I also start to pour even more dragon power into my sword. A magic blade is then formed after a huge amount of power is poured into it. The blade in my hand is strengthened using the power of the strongest dragon, it is now a sword that is capable of cutting down even the gods.

Once again, Georudo's spear clashes against my sword. There will be no more trick this time. It is going to be a quick frontal assault. My dragon powered sword starts cutting into the tip of Georudo's spear. Regardless of what my sword is up against, when combined with the strength in my right hand, I am capable of cutting through anything. Pushing his spear away, I reverse the blade of my sword and lower it to my side. I slash an arc diagonally upward and cut into Georudo's beast body all the way across his chest.

"Grrggggg!? How absurd, for someone in this world to overpower me so easily."

"I call it, Dragon Claw Sword. Georudo, the amount of power that you've demonstrated in this world cannot be label weak. It's just that you've chosen the wrong opponent."

"What are you saying!?"

Georudo tightly embraces the wound on his chest with his left arm. Furthermore, his beast body continues to sneer at me despite having a continuous stream of blood dripping onto the ground. Out of mercy, I slice its neck and end its suffering. The head of the beast rolls in the air and just before it drops onto the ground, I use my magic to erase it. While black blood continues to gush out of him like a waterfall, Georudo keeps his stare on me. He directs all his rage and every curse into his gaze and I, myself, return the straight stare.

"Guuu, for me to be defeated by a dragon who was reincarnated into a mere human, what a disgrace!"

"Like I said, you've chosen the wrong opponent to fight against. Young child."

Instantly, Georudo's body stiffens and deprives of any movements. In his eyes, rage and hatred rapidly retreat. Georudo's body seems to have stopped functioning as time continues on. Trembling from the pain, after a while, even the blood stops gushing out of his wound. Substituting his rage is now unspeakable fear, regret, and despair. All of the negative emotions come flooding out in his mind and are truly beyond his describable words. Georudo sees it. He sees my dragon eyes shining in seven colors.

"Impossible, it cannot be, how can you, to be an a place like this! You're him, you're, Dra…..!!"

"I'll end it quickly, Georudo. This world is not a place where you're suppose to be in."

I slice off Georudo's neck as a mercy given to him. In addition, I cut it up to bits as it flies in the air. Georudo is now released from the absolute terror that binds him and ending his life is the quickest way to free him. After his head was cut off and erased, Georudo's body collapses and quickly turns into ashes and gets blown away by the wind.

“Farewell, Demonic knight. If there’s something you wish to curse, then you should curse your own misfortune. If there’s something you wish to grieve about, grieve at your own fate which has brought you to encounter me. If you wish to curse the one who brought you to your end, then you may curse me.”

[To be continued]

[Chapter 13]

-The Fallen God and the Reincarnated Dragon-

After confirming Georudo's soul and body had completely disappeared, I look back at Diadora who is inside the magic circle that I made to protect and help her recover. I've supplied the magic circle with my own dragon power to help Diadora recover her lost magic and the vigor that she used up. Right now, her status is almost fully recovered. Seeing all six membraneous wings, each with a different color, on my back, the look on Diadora's face is still filled with surprise, but suddenly, a soft light arises from her agate pupils, then she lets out a childish smile on her lovely lips.

"Last night, you told me to think of you as a mysterious man, however, I never would have guessed that it was something like this."

It's hard to tell whether or not Diadora is speaking to me in a mocking or an amazed tone. As for me, I was ready to reply in my defense, but I let out a sigh of relief after hearing her words. However, under the gaze of Black Rose, I feel slightly uneasy, thinking that she would pursue the topic and avoid making eye contact involuntarily.

"Are you curious about these?"

I lightly flap the wings on my back and show them to her. The wings make rustling noises in the process, but Diadora doesn't seem to have any interest in them.

"Well. For a dragon's soul to reside within the body of a human, I really did not consider that in the least. Though, I've never seen a real dragon before, meeting someone who was once a dragon and who was then reborn as a human, it's something very unique."

"I won't deny that, but unexpected events do tend to happen, and so with your memories of your previous life cleansed, it is not so hard to imagine that even you might have been a living dragon in your last incarnation. Such is how the endless cycle of rebirth operates."

"It must really be endless then. Speaking of which, I wonder; when are you going to release me from this?"

Diadora says so while she sulks and pokes her right index finger at the invisible barrier. Staring at me with her eyes half closed and through pupils that seem to breathe in one's soul, it is an extremely childish look that I did not imagine possible, and to witness it, fascinates me.

While I'm still intrigued at Diadora's puffing and behaving like a child, I extract and apply a little of my power onto my sword and then lightly touch the outer border of the magical barrier with the tip of the blade. I discontinue the magic by doing so and thus allow the space inside to reunite with the space outside. As the magic circle constructed with dragon's language breaks down, it releases countless light particles up into the air, and in no time, Diadora is surrounded by what seemingly is 'falling' white snow.

"Ara, they are beautiful, just like the snowflakes. Fufu, although their behavior is quite the opposite."

“I’m pleased to hear that you like it, however, now isn’t the time for comforting talk, not while formidable foes such as Geren and Georg still remain. Christina-san and Selia were left to fight Geren, and so I will settle the score with Georg.”

“I, too, shall go, is what I want to say, but it will be impossible to catch up with you since you have those wings. Perhaps, we *can* go together if you were to *embrace* me?”

Gently reaching out her arms and caressing my cheeks, Diadora whispers honeyed words into my ears. The alluring voice makes it feel as if I’ve fallen victim to a lewd demon, whom visits men in their beds in the midst of night and bewilders them. Personally, I don’t think Diadora has any such ulterior motives, however, with such extraordinary and inhuman beauty, it wouldn’t be wrong to question if there was magic used to produce such charm and sexual appeal.

As a healthy, living, human male, with Diadora in front of my sight, and being tempted as her finger moves closer to my lips, for just a moment, I’ve completely forgotten about the imminent threat that the devils are posing. I muster up all of my will and suppress my desires, then I gently take Diadora’s hand and pull it away from touching my cheeks.

Regardless of the fact that the hair on the back of my neck is standing up, I have full control of my body. My body was captivated by Diadora. At times, being too beautiful can be quite a problem. Diadora’s hands are soft and slim, they feel as if they would break if I was to apply even the slightest bit of strength, and so I treat the grasping of her hands the same as handling roses.

I’m dealing with the Spirit of the Black Rose after all, I can’t make any mistake now.

“I’m sorry, it is easier if I go and fight Georg alone. And it seems like there are still enemies here that have yet to be dealt with. Diadora, you need to stay here and help the Wood Elves in putting an end to the demonic soldiers.”

“Alright. If you say so. As long as you pay attention to your surroundings, I doubt anyone here will be able to defeat you, and so I’m worrying about a different matter. Won’t the forest be blown away if you use too much power?”

Diadora speaks jokingly and I could only let out a smile, obviously understanding the joke, which I rarely do.

“It’s one of the things I’ve been mindful of. I will not make the mistake of wreaking havoc when I was the one who proposed to help. Now, it’s time for me to get going.”

“Yes, I pray you’ll have the fortunes of war, Dran.”

“Thank you.”

Leaving behind these words of gratitude, I spread my wings and take off. First, I think I will destroy the encircling wall, then I am going to assist in the destruction of the Makai gate that is here. After that, I plan to destroy each of the gates Geren and Georg are guarding. The group which Olivier and the Chiefs led must have gone to where Georudo was since they were not here. Since the destruction of this Makai gate here is almost finished, there is

nothing more for me to worry about here. Thus, the safety of Christina-san, Selia, Gio, and Fio flashes through my mind.

♦ ♦ ♦

Christina is worrying about Dran's well being. After he left, the group continued to advance at a steady pace. The demonic minions continuously ambushed them but were successfully repelled, repeatedly. The Wolf-men are blessed with a strong physique and have a high aptitude for being warriors. Arachne can use magic and possess great agility and excellent situational awareness through their eyes, they are a very well-rounded force overall. The Wood Elves received some help from the spirits they've bonded with, on top of being capable individuals. Despite being a force consisting of many different races, there are no difficulties coordinating formations and attacks. Everyone is advancing through the Makai-like landscape with uttermost seriousness, but the longer they stay within the toxic surroundings, the more it wears away at their strength and spirit. The medicine brought along was specifically for this reason. They borrow the power of the wind and earth spirit to purify the miasma. The things that they can do is lie to themselves and to keep moving forward, step by step, deeper into the forest as its turning more and more foreign.

With the unexpected reinforcement from Christina and Selia, they displayed excellent combat efficiency and thus the three races reconsidered the fighting capabilities of Humans and Lamia greatly. The demonic minions would always clash with the frontline first before scattering, thus making the fight easier and ultimately ending within a short amount of time. If the enemies were only made up of low-level devils then, even with Dran being absent, it will only be a matter of time before the gate is destroyed. Dran is an existence worthy of being feared by all invading devils, not just the low-level minions. With steady progress, they finally make their way to the gate and here is where their biggest enemy awaits.

Countless voices combined together, all in agony and suffering, leak from the Makai gate. The gate is easily spotted since it stands out and the area around it has been completely cleared of every tree to make way for the battle. Every tree is either uprooted or cut down and their logs and branches are piled up to the side like a mountain. There is nowhere to hide. To fight around the gate means that the Ente forces cannot use the forest to their advantage, and so they hail down arrows imbued with magic at the defenders.

"What's wrong? Is that it? The people of Ente! Is this the only trick you scums are capable of? Huh!? Fuhahahaha! This Geren can stand here for days and you still won't be able to scratch me with such half-hearted tricks!!"

As if his body is darkness itself, the black giant, Geren, stands as he easily swings his axe with his right hand and sweeps away any magic imbued arrows that are aimed at him while feeling disappointment. Geren is in the open, like a boat in the middle of a storm, and he sweeps aside the arrows heading toward him like blowing away leaves. Throwing spears, rocks, and even flame shell magic, they are all crushed by Geren without ever touching his armor. Due to the outrageous way Geren handled his axe, Ente's forces surround Geren,

while taking care not to step too close or risk being blown away and killed. The momentum of Ente's force is barely holding up.

"Fufufu, you pieces of trash can't defeat me even if there are ten thousand of you. You'll have more hope if you were to prepare one thousand heroes against me."

Bearing the axe on his shoulder, Geren steps forward, anticipating another fight with the formidable opponent from the night before. The number of the demonic minions is slowly being reduced, but they are only sacrificial pawns that can be replenished later.

The warriors of Ente are confident that if they completely killed off the minions, they can combine their power to take down Geren. Being surrounded, Geren more or less finds it annoying but he realizes it is futile to complain about such a useless matter.

Gio, who has led the Wood Elves up until now with attacks like bows and spirit magic, is now stumbling in front of Geren. The sense of helplessness and frustration drives him to grind his teeth and cause wrinkles to show on his forehead. Although the Wolf-men and Arachne boldly confront Geren, they cannot topple his mountain-like figure. Moreover, on the contrary to how he looks, Geren is incredibly agile, his swift movements outclassed both races, and so they cannot land an injuring blow.

Doubts start to surface as they face the monster that is blocking their path. In addition, they had consumed much of the medicine already and are now continuing to exhaust their magic in order to continue to fight in this miasma. As they continue to struggle to no avail, their breathing becomes heavier and heavier to the point where it seems like their necks are being strangled by ropes. For those that become impatient and start to act carelessly, they meet with their inevitable end. Now, the morale of the group is being destroyed. One of the frustrated Arachne with burn marks on her beautiful face suddenly launches herself at Geren's leg.

The Arachne is young, and on her black exoskeleton are three yellow marking lines. Peeking out behind her shoulder length trimmed pale blue hair are six spider eyes. Those eyes are those that most humans can sympathize with, as they are filled with hatred and anger towards the enemy that had brought destruction upon her home.

With the explosive jumping ability provided by the spider legs, the Arachne thrusts out a shiny black spear, grasped firmly with both hands, and aims for Geren's ankle. Among the group, Gio is the first to notice the reckless action. He instantly understands her intention, more or less, and shouts out the order.

"It won't work, not alone!! Back her up!"

Unfortunately for the Arachne, just as Gio's order to help her reaches the other Wood Elves' ears, the speed at which she is moving is too great thus she soon finds herself alone within Geren's grasps.

"Yahhh!!"

"Tch, you insect. I'll exterminate you right now."

Even for the skilled soldiers, it would have been difficult to read the Arachne's movements, but against Geren, the Arachne's relatively small figure never leaves his sight as she crawls, leaving her shadow below him. Casually, like an annoyed human would have paid just enough attention to an insect while exterminating the pest, he swings the axe held in his right hand right in front of the Arachne. The axe comes straight down, as straight as an arrow. Although his attack was sudden, the girl's spear's tip unexpectedly managed to touch his body, but it did nothing to him. However, it allowed her to evade the decimating axe and ultimately escape death. Inside the Arachne's mind, she understands that she's nearing her final moment, her eyes are open wide and full of terror. No matter what, the Arachne is but an individual who acted out of frustration, and soon she would become the latest death toll. That is until someone dashes in, leaving behind a quick silvery trail as she arrives right next to her in order to help. Swiftly wrapping an arm around the Arachne's small and feminine waist, they jump away and the quicksilvery trail is once again seen.

Where the axe struck the earth, cracks resembling a spider web can be seen, as well as large chunks of scattered rock. What's more, it wasn't a technique of any sort, the strike only had pure power behind it. Such power would have easily demolished even the most well-built house. The one who was moving like quicksilver through the wind as well as helping the troubled Arachne is none other than Christina. Christina looks back at Geren without any emotion, at which Geren is delighted. The one whom Geren wants to fight has finally shown herself.

"Are you alright?"

Unfazed by Geren's blood red eyes looking at her, Christina asks of the Arachne she's holding in her left arm. The Arachne, still in a daze, looks at her savior who swiftly helped her escape her life threatening situation, and eventually manages to slowly speak out.

"H-hai. I'm…alright-desu."

"If so, I'm glad I made it. I'll take that one. You need to fall back."

Hearing the trembling voice of the young Arachne, Christina takes her sight off of Geren, smiling warmly and speaks in gentle tone to the now meek child. Facing Christina's warm smile, gentle voice, mesmerizing beauty, and atop of being rescued from death just moments before, the young Arachne's soul is seemingly enraptured by Christina. Her vision is charmed and her cheeks are dyed in the colour of red rose. The young girl holds some kind of feeling for Christina, that much is apparent to everyone.

While she was coming to the present battle ground, Christina had fought among the vanguards and kept the formation in check, she had helped dozens and not just this young Arachne alone. Regardless of race or gender, whenever Christina helps someone, she would show the same expression, similar to what she's displaying now. Before the passionate stares of the girl, Christina releases her embracing arm from the girl's waist. Christina understands that, right now, she is like a single rope that can be used to pull others out of the pit of death, her heart's aching as she quashed out such thoughts.

"Hai, I'll do as you told. My name is Ijeri-desu. Thank you very much, Ane-sama."

"Ah, quickly now, please fall back."

Ane-sama? Christina thinks as she turns her gaze to, once again, look at Geren and his red eyes. Even Ijeri at this time understands that Christina does not have the leisure to help others in the upcoming clash. The Makai Knight picks up his axe with both hands, holds it sideways, and silently gazes at Christina.

Before them, Christina and Geren are confronting one another, and Gio orders the present Ente's forces to halt all magic and arrow attacks. All of those whom had witnessed Christina's display of abilities in the defensive battle the night before quickly ceased attacking in panic. It's not that they are doubting Christina's abilities, it's because they know that bombarding the fight with arrows and magic while calling it 'support' will do more harm than good. Their judgement is absolutely correct.

Taking a stance with her sword, Elspard, lowered on her right side, Christina then checks the flow of magic within her own body, making sure that it is well-distributed and there are no odd disruptions. Although she is wearing the same armor she was wearing at the start of the journey into Ente up until this moment, it does not change the fact that taking a direct hit from the axe wielding devil is a terrible idea. In one way or another, she will have to defeat the devil without getting hit by him and his axe. Everybody present here admitted that the requirements for Christina to be victorious is very difficult.

"Oi, if it isn't Christina. Looks like these fellows of yours are rational enough to stop causing a disturbance. So, did you eat well enough? Had a good night sleep? Fully replenish your spirit*?

I was looking forward to having an enjoyable fight against you. Don't worry, neither my troops nor your friends will interfere. That said, let's go all out in a battle to the death, daughter of the Superrace." (T.L. Geren is referring to her 'will' to fight.)

"I'm honored to hear that you've waited eagerly for this fight; however, I'm sincerely asking that'd you refrain from calling me 'daughter of the Superrace,' for I feel troubled when hearing it. Regardless, this time, the fight will be settled. I will defeat you with all my might."

"Hahahahaha, really now, then it won't be boring for sure. It's relatively easy for you to destroy the Makai Gate here. Of course, that can only happen once you've defeated me, which is the hardest part."

"As long as I remain standing, this forest's landscape will continue to transform more and more into the likeness that's of Makai. The longer I remain, the more devastation this forest and those who live in it will suffer. Now, with that in mind, come at me with all you've got." (╬ﾟДﾟ)╬

"I knew that already. And because I know, I will come at you as such!"

Christina lowers her stance and charges straight at Geren like a gushing torrent of water. Each step Christina takes pushes her forward at a speed far surpassing human standards, the term 'Superrace' mentioned by Geren is very fitting. Her long, sterling-silver hair flutters in the wind as she runs while bathing in the sunlight. It shines a brilliant silver, as if countless polished pearls were mixed within. Then, looming over Christina's head, a phantasmal serpent simultaneously attacks with it's sharp fangs. Selia had been encamping behind

Christina and is now offering support. Remaining composed, Christina backs off slightly to allow the magic, unique to the Lamia, to activate.

“Jaramu!!”

“Nuhahahaha, of course its the Lamia girl, your name is Selia if I’m not mistaken. I remember you. With the two of you presently here, it will serve as a continuation to our unresolved fight last night. This is much better than single combat. This was what I truly wished for!”

If there were any adult humans present here, the serpent could easily swallow three or four of them without any difficulty. Even though the cursed serpent was made with magic, Geren thrusts out his left fist, the size of a huge boulder, and mercilessly embeds his fist into the serpent’s head. The serpent’s head then literally explodes and the pieces, once part of the head, are sent flying everywhere. It disappears moments after.

As soon as the bits and pieces of the serpent disappear, Christina closes in. Facing off against Geren’s great physique, it is extremely difficult for her blade to even reach his torso. Naturally, Christina targets his lower body, his legs specifically. As for Geren, having someone like Christina as an opponent, who’s not even half his height, is more troublesome than someone who has a similar build to himself. After all, being on the ground, Christina is very mobile. However, his overwhelming physical strength made up for it, and even Geren is confident that one good blow will be all it will take to kill Christina.

Elspard already had magical characters engraved in its blade, and with the glowing blue magic crystal fitted inside the end of the handle supplying magic, the sharpness of the blade rose to an absurd level. Last night, when it went up against Geren’s sturdy body, Christina demonstrated that the sword does possess the power to kill him. As Christina fearlessly closes the distance, Geren, being frank, dully slams his axe into the ground in front of him. It can hardly be considered physical labor, since he only moves his shoulder, elbow, and wrist, with minimal effort. When such an individual steps onto the battlefield in this world, it’s no wonder there would be mountains of corpses laid across the land.

The axe packed enough power to send even someone of the Giant race to the next life, but Christina nimbly takes two steps to the right and evades. The axe passes down her left flank with wind crushing momentum, the strong gust blowing and disrupting the silver-haired lady’s momentum. The wind is so strong that Christina feels as if it’s peeling away the skin on her cheek. Christina goes past the axe, but she stays strong and dashes between Geren’s legs. With all her strength, Christina slashes at his exposed left shin. With Christina’s skills, power, and her enhanced sword, even slashing through armor is basically the same as slashing through water, much less flesh. As one would expect Christina to damage Geren, Geren then lifts his left leg as he uses his right foot to balance his body to evade the sharp blade. Next, he shifts his right foot and shoots a downward left leg kick at Christina, the speed of the kick rivaling Christina’s sword slash*. *Goor*, hearing the sound of Geren’s powerful incoming kick transmitted through the wind, Christina ducks to the side and dodges it by a hair’s strand. She manages to not become a scattered mass of meat and bones. Geren’s powerful left kick goes past Christina without doing any harm and shifts his vision away from her at the same time.(T.L. Estelion’s beautiful illustration.)

After doing a body rotation, Geren turns his head and looks down at Christina. The ground beneath his right foot is gouged out and buried up to his ankle, all due to his sheer mass combined with the incredible amount of force when he shifted his foot. While this exchange was happening, Selia, with her snake pupils looking at Geren, is finishing up her chant and is ready to unleash the magic at Geren.

「Oh the will of the earth. Hear my voice. Unbind the unseen chains restraining thee power. Giveth form to the calamity that will bring forth destruction 'neath the heavens.」

Using powerful magic that outclasses any magic she had used the night before, Selia held both hands high above as a heat haze covers her entire body. As she's chanting, her melodious voice sounds more and more malicious, until it's finished. Thereupon, the soil and rocks gradually start to raise all at once. The materials are attracted and gathered by an invisible spot formed high above Selia's head. Soon, all of the debris accumulates, gaining in size, eventually becoming a huge mass of earth that is easily three times as massive as Geren. Manipulating gravity's attractive property, Selia is planning to drop the enormous boulder which she is making on top of the enemy, and its makeup consists of dirt, soil, and rocks. In terms of ranking, magic that allows one to manipulate gravity is superior to other earth based magic.

"「Gaia Strike!!!」"

The enormous earthen mass accumulated over Selia casts a huge shadow over the ground. Bringing both her arms down to the front, the massive boulder's shadow shakes and trembles. Soon, Geren was completely covered by its shadow as it's falling on top of him. The boulder is relatively low off the ground, and so the enormous earthen mass comes crushing down on Geren very quickly. Normally, this magic would be used against a large enemy force or to destroy a castle, even a fortress would be reduced to rubble.

As soon as she failed to slash Geren, Christina immediately retreats. On her face, a smile could be seen as she did not expect Selia to cast such magic. It would also suggest that Christina knows how terrifying the magic is and quickly gets out of its effective range. As the oversized boulder is coming down towards him, not even a single trace of fear is visible on Geren's face. Holding his axe which had accompanied him through countless battlefields with both hands, he takes one great step backward and concentrates massive amounts of touki into its blade.

"Casting such cheeky magic. Nuuuahahahahaha!!!!!"

Geren roars! As if resonating to his voice, the jet black axe is then instantly wrapped in flame. It's not flame by its true meaning, it's Geren's touki taking shape in the form of burning fire. Taking shape, a huge amount of concentrated touki is poured into the axe, then, Geren throws his axe at the「Gaia Strike」 that's coming down from above.

This Makai Knight is so reckless, even if he does that…

Christina's feeling conflicted as she thinks to herself. In the next moment, the answer to her doubt is revealed in broad daylight. It is slightly delayed, but the thunderous and eardrum breaking sound rings through the air. Geren's axe clashes with the massive earthen mass.

Altogether, the earthen mass that was formed through Selia's magic shatters and crumbles in mid-air, scattering pieces that come raining down onto the ground.

Absurdly, Geren obliterates Selia's「Gaia Strike」with a single blow. Rocks and other debris fall on top of everyone, regardless of whether they are Ente's or Makai's forces. Besides Christina and Selia, those who are watching in the distance look at Geren in complete disbelief, wanting to quickly distance themselves from him. As the debris from what was made by Selia's magic still comes pouring down, Christina weaves her way through them at an astounding speed towards Geren, filled with intent to kill. Venturing into the danger zone and inspite of red-hot chunks of rock raining down due to Geren's smashing the mass dead center, no fear surfaces on Christina's pretty face.

Christina looks like a wind spirit as she skillfully speeds through and evades the debris simultaneously. Geren stiffens up his body to defend since it's too late to try to evade the opponent's blade. Christina comes in at wind shattering speed, slashing Elspard at an even faster speed than before. The blade cuts into the back of Geren's right leg, spilling fresh poisonous black blood. The second time around, Christina managed a clean hit, despite having to deal with slightly problematic obstacles. Turning Elspard over and slashing from the right to the left, she leaves an abnormally large open wound in the back of Geren's right leg.

"Too easy!!"

Before Christina gets another chance to swing Elspard, she takes notice of Geren's axe crashing down, and moves her body away hurriedly to avoid a would-be surprise counterattack. Geren's right hand grasps onto his axe handle in mid-air and swings its edge in a crescent moon shaped motion, scrubbing into the ground in the process. From Christina's perspective, she sees the massive axe being swung at her like an enormous pendulum, and easily imagines that it would cleanly slice her into two.

"I'm not done yet!「Titan Fist」!"

Selia's angry voice echos across the battlefield. At that moment, Geren takes notice of an enormous rocky fist flying at him, its size equaling his entire body, and quickly brings his axe up to guard against it.

"Gouu!?"

Unable to withstand the force of the impact, Geren gets knocked out of balance and is blown away. He skips across the ground while letting out a serious sound. After a few bounces however, he twists his body while in mid-air, repositioning himself, and lands on two feet with little effort. Literally getting pounded, the feeling of pain spreads all over Geren's body as the attack leaves him quite surprised. (T.L. Selia The Rocky Balboa.)

"Mahh, that was a surprise. In that brief moment, I definitely felt remnants of magic belonging to a dragon that was mixed in with the cursed serpent's own magic. Fufu, this is even more interesting than I thought!"

For Selia to be able to continuously use high ranked magic like「Gaia Strike」, Christina feels completely amazed, unlike Geren. Christina tries to grasp an understanding of Selia's

ability; *Selia invoked another magic right after 「Gaia Strike」, I expected her magic to be exhausted and for her to require some time before being able to use magic again.*

“That was amazing. Completely on a different level compared to yesterday, it’s like you’re not even the same person you were yesterday, Selia.”

“It’s strange and I don’t have an explanation for it myself, but I feel terrific today-desu. It must also be thanks to the Magic Crystal and the Earth Spirit stone Dran-san had given me!”

Selia cheerfully disclosing her ‘secret weapon,’ showing Christina the Magic Crystal as well as the Earth Spirit stone in her hands. There were provisions Dran had prepared before going off to help Diadora. The Magic Crystal Selia is holding onto was one that Dran himself crystallized with the power extracted from his dragon’s soul, and so one could say that’s that Magic Crystal is very unique. In addition to the vigor Selia absorbed from Dran while sleeping, Selia also received from him an extra amount of vigor in the morning.

Selia had absorbed and is controlling that vigor with little difficulty, her state of mind and body had never been better. The Magic Crystal which contained the dragon’s vigor is very special. Even now, it contains magical power many times greater than all of the magical power Selia had used since her birth put together. In spite of her usual gentle and obedient nature, having her hands on a stupidly powerful source of power, she became much more aggressive than normal.

“I can do better-masu!

「The cursed serpent’s blood flows in my veins. It’s cursed soul is one with my own. O I beseech thee, let thy accursed roar be heard, spit out poison, and detest all life.」”

Powerful reddish-purple colored magic starts gushing out from Selia’s body and in turn causes both Christina and Geren to be taken aback. Drawing out magic from the enormous power reservoir within the Dragon Magic Crystal, this enhances Selia’s Lamia hide(scales) to a level rivaling a true dragon’s hide. The reddish-purple magic then gives form to an eight headed serpent and all its necks are connected to one body. Last night, Geren had fought against a seven headed serpent, which was a unique and very powerful magic only the Lamia are capable of using. Now, Selia is using the strongest inherited magic spell she’s currently capable of.

“「Eun Jaramu!!!」”

Eun Jaramu’s features strongly resemble a hydra, each of the serpent heads is filled with a dragon’s power. The serpent approaches Geren, pushing through the thick miasma that fills the air as well as the earth with ease. Shivers runs down Christina’s spine as she watches Eun Jaramu’s power, and she is glad she wasn’t the target of such magic. Geren holds onto his axe, full of unyielding determination, and confronts the beast. Emitting dark red magic from its scales that are reminiscent of flaming embers, some of Eun Jaramu’s heads spit liquid poison at Geren.

“Hmmm!!”

Whereas the first phantom serpent was effortlessly destroyed by Geren with a single swing of his axe, Eun Jaramu now had a considerable amount of dragon class magic mixed within, the magic is so dense that it can no longer be called phantasmal, illusional, or anything of the sort. This eight-headed hydra would not be defeated with one or two hits. Geren stands his ground against the hydra, sweeping away the toxic poison with his axe while knocking away some of the heads that try to take a bite out of him, entangling the heads which grew from the same body. Where poison drips onto his armor, black smoke comes out, and it corrodes away in an instance.

As three ferocious heads try to dig their sharp fangs into his body on his left flank, Geren, in one fluid motion, puts all three under a choke-hold. His skin burns as it's making direct contact with the hydra's reddish scales. Under the monstrous strength of Geren's muscular left arm, the sound of breaking bones can be heard under the scales of the hydra. The three heads cease moving in Geren's chokehold as their necks are crushed by him. Geren forcefully rips the heads off and drops them on the ground. The heads do not fade away and remain intact along with the remaining magical power. Thus, the ground is soaked with wet red blood flowing out of the severed necks.

After Geren dropped the three lifeless heads, the five remaining heads glare at him full of hatred, and from behind Eun Jaramu's back, Christina jumps over. Toward Geren, Selia commands Eun Jaramu to be extremely hostile, and to try to kill him with its all. However, she takes care as not to harm Christina, and orders Jaramu to take care not to injure her by mistake, especially by its poison. Now, Christina attacks Geren while Eun Jaramu is keeping him company. Geren swings his axe at Christina, Selia predicted as much and orders two of Eun Jaramu's heads to coil around his right arm and sink their fangs deep into his upper arm.

"Aaahh!!!"

Kicking strongly off of Eun Jaramu's back, Christina flies through the air like an arrow released from a bowstring, and closing in on Geren, she cuts into the right side of his neck.

I've only managed to cut through a third of his neck, it's still insufficient for killing him. Hmph! He's groaning since there are eight holes on his arm, that's the work of Eun Jaramu's sharp and black fangs that has sunk into his flesh.

Trembling from the pain and feeling angry at being bitten by Eun Jaramu, he plucks all of the remaining serpent heads off of their body and soaks the ground in more blood. The severed heads of Eun Jaramu along with its body slowly fade away into thin air along with the dragon's magic.

"Wha..? Are those ribs!?"

Selia widens her blue snake eyes, fixating on the ribs of the one who defeated her strongest magic. Geren's black rib bones are 'pushing' themselves outward.

"Fufu~ you're quite right. With some simple flesh manipulation, I can harden my skin to the same level as armor. There's no problem with manipulating my bones either."

Not so boastfully, Geren speaks as he shows Selia his broken ribs. The curved bones grow as it's in perfect condition. Then, eight rib bones grow out of his body and come flying at Selia

at breakneck speed. Selia finished a defensive barrier chant and deploys it in a hurry. She crawls away, trying to dodge the incoming bones.

One bone, two boness, avoid the bones, avoid, avoid, avoid!

Unfortunately for Selia, the bones didn't simply fly in a straight line but turned in mid-air while chasing after Selia. Just like that, the bones are relentlessly chasing after the lovely snake maiden.

"So close!"

"Give it up and die, daughter of snake!"

Four times, five times, six times Selia had avoided the attacks, but she won't be able to avoid anymore if they continue to come after her. She needs to think of something quickly to cut the bones off. Each of the bones can easily go through thick armour like paper, the barrier Selia put up didn't even slow it down, it's not possible for her to defend against them. Selia's body stiffens once she realizes that death is imminent, thinking about what a horrible way of death it is to have her body skewered with bones. Suddenly, the Dragon Magic Crystal Selia's holding in her hand shines brightly in a different colour, white.

"Eh? Whoa! The Magic Crystal Dran-san gave to me is defending me?"

This Dragon Magic Crystal Dran had given to Selia as a precaution functions by sensing Selia's near death situation and is playing its role magnificently. As soon as Geren's bone attacks get too close for comfort for Selia, they are instantly erased. The Dragon Magic Crystal emits white light and is creating a sanctuary encompassed by divine white light. Bones fly across the border line one by one, all quickly turn into white light particles.

"Goooooaaaaahhhhhhh!! That's…ancient Dragon race's….!!!!"

The Dragon Magic Crystal continues to sustain the light sphere which is preventing Geren's bones from entering while also causing him pain. Seeing as it's pointless, Geren discontinues his pursuit, and instantly, the pain he receives from the Dragon Magic Crystal stops.

'No matter the quantity, and no matter the duration, as soon as the dragon's magic touches your body, you will feel as if you're being trampled upon.' (T.L. Assuming pure dragon magic gives the most pain.)

Geren quietly recalls and restates Georg's warning. He stumbles a few steps while bearing with the pain, such action on the battlefield will most likely result in fatal consequences. Needless to say, Christina did not miss such a tempting moment of carelessness.

"Haahh!!"

"Tsk! Trying to exploit my opening huh? We'll see about that!"

Coming at him from behind, Christina kicks off the ground, temporarily using the wind to aid her flight, she slashes her sword, aiming for Geren's head. This time, she's planning to slice his head into two, vertically, instead of severing his neck. In reality, however, the Makai

Knight has no intention of letting his head be sliced off in any way. Enduring the effects of dragon magic on his mind and body, Geren whirls his axe at Christina, the wind pressure created by his action is very strong, even throwing Christina off-balance.

A single swing could kill thousands. Geren wielded the axe with the strength of tens of thousands of men, but now he feels an uncomfortable weight as he lifts it. Geren understands what's happening. Blocking the axe in mid-air using Elspard, Christina then lands on top of the axe. Her hand touches the rough and uneven surface of the axe's blade, the feeling transmitted through her hand makes her feels unpleasant. The weirdness, out of this world feeling, in pattern designs on it doesn't help either. Meanwhile, Geren concentrates his touki into his left arm and tries to roast Christina who's on his axe. Christina endures the blazing pain and quickly dashes away.

Although in the last battle, Christina was able to run up Geren's left arm, this time she attempts to run up his right, which is occupied with wielding his axe. Geren rotates his body, trying to do the same thing he did in their previous battle, but this time Christina's feet are faster, and Selia is also casting magic to distract him.

"「Oh the will of the Earth. Hear my voice. Become the chains that bind my enemy, Earth Chain Bind!」"

One by one, gigantic ringed chains start coming out of the unearthly Makai landscape, each chain seems to contain a mind of its own and starts wrapping themselves around Geren, tightly restricting his movement. Being tied down by chains upon chains, Geren's moments are sealed. Watching the entire process is similar to watching a horde of countless snakes seizing one prey. The chains are made out of the very ground that Geren strengthened, after a few moments he would be able to break free, however, time is scarce and a brief moment is all it would take for the enemy to kill you.

Christina pushes on with her all and makes sure not to miss the precious chance Selia had created. Despite being chained down, Geren is not completely immobilized, inching his foot little by little, focusing his touki, he's breaking free. Responding to its wielder's strong fighting spirit, Elspard's light shines brighter in the grip of Christina's hand. Elspard is emitting light bright enough to outshine the radiant sunlight, up until this moment, Christina had never felt such a sense of reliability.

"Prepare yourself!"

"Nuahahaha!!"

Geren's unable to break free, and the angle at which Christina arrives in front of his forehead is similar to how a spear wielding cavalry, mounting a warhorse, would pierce into their enemy. Geren starts to manipulate the blood flowing out of the wounds on his side but Christina wasn't so foolish as to not be expecting an attack. Nonetheless, her aim is for his neck. The moment they are both close enough to strike, everyone who's watching froze and a chill runs down their spines. Christina avoids Geren's blood strike from his open wounds, her silver hair bundled by a blue ribbon flutters according to her movements as if dancing.

After avoiding Geren's final attempt in the nick of time, Christina swings Elspard without any hesitation. The feelings of cutting through thick iron, elastic flesh, and bones are

transmitted through the blade, and in front of Christina's vision, she sees Geren's separated head. Christina's gaze meets with Geren's, and as Geren's head is slowly falling down, he lets out a satisfied smile.

"Splendid, utterly splendid!"

Geren's head falls onto the ground while muttering in a praiseworthy voice. His head then crumbles to dust, a natural end for those who are not born in this world, his body too disappears in the same fashion in front of Christina. In the end, not even dust remains. Christina watches to make sure Geren had disappeared completely, and loosened up a bit while letting out a small breath. That said, there are demonic minions still remaining, but now that Christina had defeated the biggest obstacle, everyone was allowed to relax, just a little. Given that, their focus is still vigilantly placed on fighting the remaining enemies.

Shortly following Geren's defeat, the Makai Gate is destroyed, and as soon as it happens, warriors of Ente cheer loudly in unison across the battlefield. After the battle between Selia and Christina against Geren is resolved, their allies let out courageous war cries and literally start to mop the floor with the demonic minions. Christina starts to inhale air deeply which helps to speed up the magic recovery process since she used up so much in the fight just now. She approaches Selia, who's holding the Dragon Magic Crystal, while feeling worried since Selia doesn't look tired at all.

"Christina-san, are you alright-desu? Somehow, we managed to beat him, but I don't think I want to ever do that again."

Seeing that Selia, who is hugging the Dragon Magic Crystal Dran gave her into her chest like it was a charm, is asking her, Christina hurries over while her breathing is still rough. Although they are still in the midst of a battle, Christina responds to Selia in a soft and tender voice, full of warmth.

"I'm fine. I've never faced someone who's as powerful as him. Speaking of which, I was a little shocked when you used powerful magic one after another, Selia."

"It was all thanks to the magic crystal that I received from Dran-san. Plus, I've received quite a bit of vigor this morning as well. I was able to accomplish this feat thanks to Dran-san-desu. Ehehe."

Christina laughs seeing Selia's smile, because it sort of reminds her of the love stories she was told, although she keeps it in the corner of her mind and doesn't speak of it. After all, it's not the right time and place for a girl chat. On the contrary, Selia seems to have been disconnected a little from reality after defeating Geren, and Christina now is at a loss on a certain issue.

"I wonder how Diadora-san and Dran-san are doing?"

The question turns Selia's smiling face slightly gloomy, and the same goes for Christina. On the way here, out of nowhere Dran stated that he'll head to the same place as director Olivier, toward Georudo. Then, with minimal explanations, he took off, leaving Christina to question his actions.

“I-if it’s Dran-san, he’ll be able to take care of himself, although it’s only a hunch. Well, after all, he didn’t seem to be wary of Geren’s strength at all, even after witnessing it.

However, he’s acting alone more or less. Thus, we have no choice but to believe in his strength and pray for his safety.”

“….Yeah. It’s… like that. I know Dran-san’s strength very well-desu. If it’s Dran-san, he’ll definitely be alright, uhh, definitely.”

“Yosh! Right, we should join the battle at this time too. Since the Makai Gate over here was destroyed, why don’t we join the others?”

While answering Selia’s worry, a question pops up into Christina’s mind, but she refrains herself from saying it aloud.

…..However, what was that strange presence I felt back then, shortly after Dran headed off?

It was Dran growing dragon wings out of his body, and it also happened that the moment he did it, a majority of his body turned into that of a dragon. However, Christina had no idea what it was nor did she suspect that it was Dran, even up to this moment. How Dran was able to transform his body into a dragon, the time for Christina to find out has yet to come.

♦ ♦ ♦

Christina-san, together with Selia, defeated Geren after all.

Flapping my wings after confirming Christina-san’s victory and also the destruction of all the lesser Makai Gates, I make my way over and overlook this ground. Here lies the only remaining Makai Gate along with its defender, Georg. However, the possibility of reinforcements coming through the Makai Gate and turning this world into Makai itself remains.

I must destroy the Makai Gate before any more formidable opponents get into this world, which in turn will speed up the process of turning the beautiful forest of Ente into something detestable.

There are presences of several hundred minions, but they are some distance away from the Gate itself. I’m certain that Georg has purposely arranged it to avoid having anyone meddling with our fight.

I look over to where the Gate is and, sure enough, I see Georg standing in front of the enormous structure that is as big as the elder tree within the village of Sai-West. The forest around here has been cut down and leveled. The landscape looks almost exactly like in Makai. There are high concentration levels of dangerous magic mixed in the wind, and swirling above the Makai Gate are ashen clouds which spark purple lightning every so often.

Although the Gate’s doors themselves are tightly shut, there are streams of various nasty coloured liquids such as purple and yellow flowing out, seeping into the earth like blood vessels. Adding more to the bizarreness, the vessels would lead to areas where the sound of heartbeats can he heard. The environment here almost exactly resembles the world in Makai,

but even for the toughest living species in this world, bearing to live here is next to impossible.

As I descend slowly, with each flap of my wings sweeping away the dense miasma, Georg stands watching in silence. The caliber of his touki now is different from last night, it's stronger. This is what one would expect from someone who showed up with preparations, and I feel eager to test the extent of his power.

"All of your comrades along with the other lesser Makai Gates have been purged from this world, Georg."

"It's the destined end of those who have exhausted their power in battle. Please, there's no need for you to lament. For us, the corrupted ones, all have our time of radiant glory, and afterward, we continue to struggle until our last breath."

Georg's attitude right now is different, it's not the same as last night where he was haughtily wishing for a worthy opponent to battle against. The him now has given me a reason to feel a degree of respect. Now, I may have come to notice another side of them* that I had not known prior to my soul transmigration, during the time when I was living a dragon life. While that may be true, what I've set out to do remains unchanged. However, I do feel a need to adjust my attitude and hold true to my opponent's resolve.(T.L. Evil entities.)

"If you were to place your honor in a righteous way, then maybe we would have to fight."

"Even if you say that, it does not matter now. I've made my decision and I wish to see it through. It's unnecessary to show me sympathy or pity."

"If that's the case, then let us put an end to all of this. You are an enemy whom I must defeat. Nothing more, and nothing less."

"So, let us begin. Allow me to witness it once again, the power which scorched the entire battlefield in a sea of flames, but, after so long, that power might have weakened."

"You must have come to an understanding of what it means to challenge my soul in battle, you are one of those 'battle freaks' after all. But it is beyond you. You will perish as the feeling of helplessness consumes you whole. Not once has any Evil God or Demon Lord escaped such fate."

I begin by slowly folding my wings. Georg reaches for his swords. Compared to my past self which Georg has seen, as a human in flesh and blood, I'm significantly weaker. Just because that's true however, it does not mean that my soul forgets the delightful feeling of battle, and all the more reason for me to not be defeat by a battle freak. While his entire body is emitting touki which looks like rising smoke, Georg draws his swords. The sound of grinding metal, as the swords were drawn, penetrates my eardrums.

"Fufu, I've determined my reason to live on long ago, and so I've continuously seek out battles. I've been hard searching for someone of your caliber, and now that I have, I will finally be able to feel my soul burning. Ever since the first time I witnessed one of your many duels with the Divine God of War, Ardes-sama*, I've always wanted to cross swords and exchange blows with you." (T.L. Ardes, a drug to to help the immune system.)

“Recalling from the depths of my mind, you must be one of Ardes’s retainer. Although wasn’t the brightest, you were still akin to a righteous God, now the battle freak had fallen into Makai.”

“I was drunk with bloodlust during the time of war. I remembered being in the greatest of joys as I continued to kill non-stop. In the end, I was cast out from the realm of Gods. Well, to think I would encounter you here, it’s almost a miracle. I’ve only ever dreamt of having a chance to fight against you. Thus, I want to fight with everything I have and wish to relocate. This battleground is inadequate in withstanding great power. If you allow it, then, together, we will travel into Makai.”

At the same time Georg finished talking, from each corner of the Makai Gate, pillars of light rose to the heaven, each shining in a different colour, and different corner of the Gate. Up above the clouds, the four light pillars start to link with each other. Before long, I’m trapped within a light cube. However, Georg isn’t aiming to confine me within this cube of light. The gate’s doors slowly open on both sides, then the passage through space leading into Makai is revealed. The toxic wind from Makai blows through, and then I start feeling that the space within the light cube is gradually separating itself from the space outside.

“Now, allow me to welcome you into my domain within Makai, Ancient Divine Dragon-sama!”

It is as I figured, the space inside this cube will temporarily transfer us into Makai. Although going by this method has a time limit, it is still a very bold act to perform. Regardless, this way, I can fight without having to mind others witnessing or interfering, I’m quite grateful.

While I was thinking, the space inside and outside of the cube is completely severed. In the next moment, Georg and I will arrive at Makai, the world where Evil Gods reside. Without a sound, and a feeling of tremor, the transfer process activates.

“Taking me on a trip without yet hearing my consent, but through your courtesy, I shall tolerate it.”

Immediately afterward, I feel slightly dizzy which might be due to motion sickness since we crossed through vast space in virtually no time. The world and atmosphere outside the cube had also changed. Looking up at the sky with ever changing colours, countless star lights twinkling within the darkness every changing colour of the sky for as far as the eye can see. Each one of them may be a lesser world of Makai, or it could be that they are stars and galaxies existing within this large Makai. Removing my gaze from the sky, I start surveying the land. This place, and even going beyond, is desolated and a complete wasteland.

“Your domain, you welcomed me to a remote and rather lonely place. There’s not even a single castle in sight.”

White dust particles flow past me as they disappear into the wind. Soon, the light cube dissolved completely, then I realize that I am now truly in Makai. It’s been a very long while since I’ve last visited this world, certainly the first time ever since I was reborn a man. You really never know what the future might hold.

“By our nature, we follow the ways of soldiers and live as such. The lifestyle befitted of kings and nobles is far from our cause. On behalf of all of us, I beg for your forgiveness. Moreover, this is where I’d like our battle to take place. So please, by all means you can do as you wish here.

With that, please allow me to show you my hospitality. From the Heart of the Origin Dragon, One Pillar of the Seven Dragons of Origin, The Bane of all Evil Gods, The Seven Colours of Catastrophes, The Rainbow of Ruins, The Dragon whom all Evil Gods fear above all else!!”

Makai’s miasma magic power starts to overflow from Georg’s body. Cracks then start to appear on his body, they look red hot as if there is lava flowing within his body. Although his body appeared to be covered in wounds, there is no sign of even a single drop of blood on his skin. Furthermore, as a result of his transformation, Georg’s build became even bigger than he already was. That’s not all, dense touki spews out of the wound-like cracks from within his body. His head, his shoulders, along with his elbows all grow in size and length. Here in Makai, Georg is able to take on his original appearance and power.

“Your spirit is commendable. Thus, I shall make your wish come true. However, in exchange, your whole existence will be annihilated.”

“Then, if possible, I wish to cross swords with you. Afterward, I don’t mind paying the price. Be it as it may, I’ve already lost. I will wield my blades without letting my pride interfere!!”

I open my wings, filling my sword with dragon magic, and prepare for battle.

Georg makes the first move. In Makai where he can fully utilize his power, Georg’s current power is now in the realm incomparable with last night’s, not that I am saying I’d rather fight him back then. The touki being emitted from his entire body is already functioning as a weapon. If we were in the human world, just a simple touch would have been enough to extinguish a mortal’s soul. In an instant, Georg closes the distance and swings down his three massive swords at me.

“ARGGHHH!!!”

“Huff!”

With my sword, Dragon Claw Sword, I repel the three large blades with one swing. As my sword meet with his, our power goes head to head. A powerful shock wave is generated and destroys a part of the nearby Makai Gate as it expand across the wasteland. Beneath my feet, a great crater was created as the result. Recovering immediately, he slashes his swords at me again. This time, I repel two of the three massive blades with my Dragon Claw Sword and jerk my body backward as the third blade, aimed for my neck, passes above my nose. In my posture, Georg tries to ram his shield being held in his lower left arm at me. I respond by flinging upright, then kicking against the shield accordingly.

My kick leaves behind a big dent on the shield while also blowing away the one behind it. As Georg flies backward, he crashes into a rocky mountain that borders the wasteland. After some significant distance was put between he and I, Georg manages to decelerate and comes to a stop with his feet dug into the ground. Thrusting his swords grasped by two hands up at

the sky, dark clouds start to form above the tip of his swords, and quickly cover the entire sky as well as the land below.

“『The Cries of the Heaven, Shrieking Heaven Annihilation』!!”

Obeying Georg’s commands, the black clouds in the sky start roaring, thunder and lightning start to glitter through the dark clouds. In addition, he impaled the ground with the sword he holds in his lower right hand and injects an enormous amount of power into the ground with the massive sword as a medium. In an instant, the earth, too, comes under his control.

“『The Roars of the Earth, Roaring Earth Annihilation』!!”

Where Georg’s sword pierced the earth, that very spot is the epicenter of the earthquakes which occurs. The ground shakes every so often, and each time, the very ground where we stand would raise. While predicting what my opponent is planning, I take a leap and soar through the sky with my wings. The next attack may or may not be the end of this battle. When Georg is around a hundred steps away from me, the magnitude of thunder finally increases in the clouds above along with the earth trembling endlessly, gaining in magnitude.

Georg then lowers the swords pointing at the sky and pulls the sword out from the earth. Next, he points all of his blades at me. His eyes shine inside the interior of his red hot and cracked helmet. Already, there is no longer the feeling of reverence toward me, they’re shining as a response to his desire to cut down his enemy with everything he has.

“Take this!『Twin Heaven and Earth Obliteration』!!”

Georg shouts. Then from above, countless purple lightning bolts rain down on top of me. From the ground, countless enormous chunks of earth are thrown at me. Georg gathered magic from Makai, adding it to his own, while also using it as a catalyst to strengthen his own magic attacks. Had we started fighting in Ente, these attacks would have, no doubt, erased most, if not all, of the forest’s western front from the face of the world. I dodge the downpouring purple lightning bolts and use my Dragon Claw Sword to slice apart the incoming earth masses, continuing my advance.

Georg however, had a different idea. The purple lightning bolts he had fired were no normal lightning and do not follow the law of nature. After each lightning strike I dodged, it turns around in mid air and chases after me. It is the same story with the bombarding earth masses. After each one went past me, they would defy the law of gravity and turn around after me just like the purple lightning.

I’ll end it soon, I’m not planning on playing a game of tag forever.

I turn my head around and look at the mess chasing after me. I decide to release my magic through the Dragon Claw Sword. Releasing my magic, I infuse even more magic into my sword and gain absolute control* over it. The sword’s blade then starts gaining in length and stops when I feel that it was enough. Pointing the tip toward the storm clouds above, I shout.(T.L. Meaning everything, its length, weight, effects. etc.)

“I’ll slice it apart altogether!”

Right now, one slash by my sword, infused with dragon magic, contained destructive power equivalent to a million lightning bolts. In a wide motion, I swing it from the sky down toward the earth and cut through every purple lightning bolt and earth shell homing at me. Everything which was in the path of my sword, from the clouds above to the ground below, was sliced — it's more appropriate to say that they were swallowed whole by the strike. A thunderous sound, loud enough to pierce through my eardrums and penetrate deep into the corner of my brain, rang across the atmosphere. When it was over, the clouds above and the earth below have been sliced into two by my strike. Left over earth shells slowly decelerate and start to crumble as they fall down toward the earth in countless pieces as the result of the magic being cut off. The earth was widely split open and the clouds disappeared completely after receiving my attack. Suppressing my magic once again, Dragon Claw Sword returned to its normal size and length within my hand. I flap my wings and continue closing the distance between Georg and me.

"As expected, you overcame it with ease. Splendid, all the time spent waiting was not to no avail. My three Flash Swords, try and slice through them, 『Three-Thousand Grand Fatal Flash.』 Hmmmmmaaaahhhhhh!!!"

In an instant, all three of his swords glow in dazzling light and he slashes them at my direction. Each sword produces one thousand light slashes. In total, they created a wall of light(slashes) that heads toward me. Each slash of light is capable of cutting through all things in creation, both physically and spiritually. Holding my sword in my right hand and my left palm open, I cross my arms in front of me in an x-shape such that my sword is positioned above my left shoulder. (T.L. One slash looks like this, now add 2999 more.)

I push my left arm, which I morphed into that of a dragon from my fingertips down to my elbow, further out in front of me. My skin was replaced with white scales, my fingers became thicker, and sharp claws grew in place of my nails. Swinging my crossed arms downward, faster than the speed of the flashes, I crush all 3,000 flashes into millions of pieces as they were coming at me before my eyes.

Ggrrrrarrrr. After pulverizing 3,000 flashes, both my hands are now by side and my throat is making a sound like that of a growling dragon. A top tier dragon is capable of manipulating the whole of creation, and twisting the world's every laws using its magic at will.

I start to alter my vocal cord along with my mouth and change them back to how they were in my previous incarnation. Changing a portion of my throat into a dragon's, I start concentrating magic into my mouth, then compress it to amplify the firepower and then finally breath it out. Along with the use of Dragon Magic, one can say that a dragon's greatest offensive weapon is its「Dragon Breath」. It is such the attack of which I am aiming at George.(T.L. Take from this as his Breath contain cosmic's power in itself. Scary as f*ck if you think about it.)

"Guaahhhhh!!"

Opening my mouth widely, one would be able to take notice of two sharp and pointy rows of dragon teeth in place of my human teeth. From the depth of my throat, overflowing bright and radiant pure white light shines. My「Breath」, which looks like white mist, comes bursting outward. Everything, from the fragments of the sword flashes that are still (lingering)

in the air along with the dense miasma, is instantly incinerated by my「Breath」as I continue to add power for the attack to completely engulf Georg in my flame.

Seeing what is unfolding before him, Georg immediately puts up his dented shield on his lower left arm to defend himself. Even so, because of my breath, the temperature of the surrounding is increasing very rapidly, and the intense heat haze blows its way around Georg's shield from the front to the back*. Recognizing this, Georg gathers and compresses the space around him, thick enough to distort the space around him to act as a shield. (T.L. That moment when you realize this MOFO can contain a black hole.)

This technique uses space itself as a shield, so unless the swordsman, or his sword, possesses an ability to break through the essence of space, he will not be able to break through regardless of his swordsmanship prowess. It's that kind of invincible technique. However, whether it is time or space, any and all substance including the soul, will be burnt to nothingness under the breath of a True Dragon. Nevertheless, after reincarnating into a human, my strength had faltered (へ)*. In my prime, my Dragon Breath stood head and toe above all others. With the power I'm currently utilizing however, it's still more than enough to burn through the distorted space.(T.L. He's slightly displeased.) (P.F. Still OP as hell.)

The proof of this being that Georg had deployed multiple distorted space shields, and the moment my white mist breath touches them, they quickly burn away so fast that calling it instantly wouldn't be wrong. When all of his shields were completely burned away, Georg slashes with the sword in his upper arms parting the fire by splitting space itself. Taking the brief moment of the opening, he jumps forward without even the slightest of hesitation. The next instant, Georg appears over my head, having traveled through space and time without wasting a single second.

"You've jumped all the way over."

I stop my breath immediately and look upward. My eyes are now shining brilliantly in seven colours as I take a look above me. I see two swords cutting through the air in a crossed "X" shape, and also spot Georg's big build behind them.

"GIVE ME YOUR HEAD!!!"

"My neck isn't so cheap that I'd give it to you willingly."

Hwooo, the intense sound of Georg's big drawn swords cutting through the air, swinging them down toward me.

Your blades, their sharpness and power were meant for those who were a War God and akin to the Gods, to be wielded to slay evil. Now that I've grown accustomed to this body with dragon flesh, I will be on the offensive from here on out!

Since my throat is still that of a dragon, my war cry turned into a dragon roar.

"Guurraahhh!!"

Slashing my Dragon Claw Sword in my right hand, it clashes with Georg's sword in his upper left hand, right in the middle of the blade. My strike causes the blade to shatter into a gazillion little pieces.

"GRRAHHH, IT'S NOT OVER YET!!!"

Refusing to give in, Georg follows up by swinging down the sword in his upper right arm like a meteorite, but I brush it aside with ease using my dragon left arm. As I am doing so, utilizing my sharpened dragon claws, I cut Georg's big sword into six different segments. Moreover, as I pull back my left arm, I align my sword and cut off Georg's upper right arm off at the elbow. Coming next would be his third swing. Pulling his big sword on his upper left arm all the way behind him in a stance, lightning sparks just like before. However, even faster than lightning, I slash and dispel the purple lightning.

I cut off Georg's wrist with it still grasping onto the sword handle, they are both flung into the air while the blade is discharging lightning. Faster than the blood which had yet to flow out of his severed wrist, I slice off his right elbow. Ignoring all the pain, Georg tries to bash his shield against my face. With the shield blocking my vision, I grip my sword with both hand and swing it down, cutting through the shield.

"My entire existence….."

The path of my sword ran straight down through Georg's shield, through his hand holding the shield, and then from the top of his head right down to his groin. A vertical line showing the bisected cut slowly becomes visible. Slowly delayed, black blood starts to overflow like a waterfall down to the ground.

"…could never be a match for you!"

The overflowing waterfall of black blood drenches the ground wet with Georg's body falling backward while splitting into two in the process. I let out a brief sigh.

The method which Georg had used to pull me into Makai should be over soon. After all, the Makai Gate which was linked to Georg's soul should have been cut just now, we should be returning to Ente from this world soon.

Georg had fallen, the time we have left to spend in Makai is nearing its end. The method should reverse itself. After some time, the ground would start to change itself back to being the forest ground within Ente.

After I've returned, I'll be sure to carry out the destruction of the Makai Gate, but before that…

I approach where Georg had fallen onto his back. Although both his body and soul were halved by my sword, there are still faint traces of light of life* left.(T.L. He sees the soul glowing.)

"Oh, that was…..no……short……from….perfection, I'm…happy. Al….though….I was….no match, how….was I?"

“Your will and strength were most praiseworthy. You are not at all inferior to Ardes.”

“Ohoho, hoho, is…that so, you’re….I’m….thankful…..your words. They truly….flatter me….., then…..its been….an honor….it…truly…was…”

“The facts remain. The cruelties you’ve committed against this world, mercilessly killing its inhabitant, you will receive your punishment. Fallen War God, the blade which I wielded to end your life is one that represents the innocent lives you’ve taken from this forest.”

“I….shall…..atone….for…..my…..sins……”

After his last words, Georg’s final remnant of life vanishes completely, his body start to disappear as well. Following that, light particles of black and white start alternating and I would soon find myself outside of Makai. In the Fallen War God’s final moments, I had sheathed my sword, stood silent, and paid my respect until his body completely faded away.

Oh those of the forest which had your life robbed from you by Georg, by these hand, I have avenged you. Thus, at least in this moment, I wish that all of you will permit yourselves and give him the recognition he deserved.

[To be continued]

[Chapter 14]

-Parting with the People of the Forest-

Georg's defeat caused the Makai Gate to gradually lose its functionality. Soon, it would cease to operate and return everything back to the other world, including me if I was still within its effective range. Since Georg's technique was only meant to be a temporary pathway to Makai, the magic automatically undid itself when Georg fell. After experiencing the intoxicating feeling of traveling between dimensions, I open my eyes to find myself returned to a world where the atmosphere was undoubtedly not of Makai, but still was a barren landscape.

Turning my head and seeing the standing structure, the Makai Gate, I let out a sigh then flash my sword at it. The path of the slash was like that of a hair strand. Evidently, I destroyed the gate which was where the dangerous miasma was coming out from. Looking at the gate, its upper portion started to slowly slide down the slanted cut line, which ran from the lower right toward the upper left. The ground tremble as the upper half hits the ground. While brushing away the rising dust cloud, I carefully confirm that all of the gate's functionalities have stopped. Everything, from the flow of the miasma to the transcendent pathway which enabled one to travel through dimensions, had been severed.

"Even after severing all connections with Makai, the miasma doesn't show any sign of clearing up anytime soon. Such a pity."

Physically destroying the doorway, which allowed interdimensional travel, had made it so that no additional miasma and intoxicating magic could pass through from Makai into the forest. It just had to be that dealing with what had already flowed into this world was another matter altogether. This region of the forest had transformed into something unsightly. According to the people who live here, the forest's self-rejuvenating process should already be in effect and is purifying itself, slowly reclaiming its former beauty. Although, seeing it taking effect and cleansing itself of miasma from every inch of the earth and tree is not as simple as the process was made to sound.

I stop pouring power into my sword, returning it to normal, while also putting away the wings on my back as well as ceased the transformation of my dragon eyes. Once my body had returned to being fully human, I do some stretches to affirm that there is no abnormality. That's when a single Wood Elf showed up from the tree line in front of me. It's the director of Galios Magic Academy, which Christina-san attends.

“I came running as fast as I could, but it seems all of my worries were unnecessary.”

As others start showing up one after another after Olivier, I come to a conclusion that Georg’s minions stationed near here must have been completely or is very close to being annihilated. Once the four biggest threats have been defeated, it should not be a problem for the combined forces to kill off the minions. Taking a closer look at Olivier, I can see dirtied marks on her clothes as well as small signs of fatigue shown on her pretty face. The smell of blood drifted through the air, but I could not see any traces of blood on her clothes nor visible wounds.

“Luck was simply on my side. Praise the God who granted me victory. Olivier-san, I’m glad to see that you are unhurt. Perhaps it was because of the forest granting you protection.”

“Lets leave that topic aside for now.”

Olivier speaks, then turns away her gaze, looking away to avoid my sugar coated words. She must have seen through me and is probably trying to uncover the truth. Drifting her sight away from me, she sees the ruins of the Makai Gate which was diagonally sliced apart by me. The gate was built out of the construction materials originating from Makai and, just by being in this world and despite the fact that I’ve already cut its power source as well as destroyed its structure, it gives off an ominous and sinister feeling. Moreover, just seeing the designs on the gate is enough to trigger a sense of disgust.

“You couldn’t have dealt with the product of Makai, the Gate, anymore brilliantly. No ordinary human being could have achieved this feat you have, Dran. Regardless if it might have been a high ranking priest or a highly skilled warrior and even if they were able to bring out the maximum potential of a Holy or Demonic sword, to have reduced the Makai Gate to such a state like you’ve done, is impossible.”

What she said was most definitely the truth. It might have been better if I had waited for reinforcement and to take the Gate down along with them, but it’s too late for me to start regretting my action.

Now that I think about it, could she have observed me when I was in the midst of battle? There’s a chance she might have seen my wings and dragon eyes just now as well.

“I’m truly overjoyed hearing that you’ve rushed to my rescue. After all, last I’ve checked, I’m undoubtedly a man, Olivier-san. I firmly believe that I will continue to be one for as long as I live.” (T.L. Faker-senpai~ Teach me how to juke questions~)

Noticing that I’m not giving her the whole truth, Olivier once again has her sight on me, but she lets out a sigh after some time. Seeing that, I could finally let out some relief. Against me, who would stubbornly dodge the question, she understands that seeking for the whole hearted truth is impossible.

“….Being too curious will most likely put me in a troublesome situation, a serpent might just emerge from the bushes. I’ve heard it, if you insist, you are *just* a man I suppose. Questioning it further will yield me no result. Needless to say, my interest ran dry.”
Fumu~ It would seem that Diadora might have informed Olivier of my true colour. Well, I’m not planning on getting involved with her in the future. I probably don’t need to ponder about it too much.
“You are wise to have come to that judgement. Now then, why don’t we have a look at the square magic formation under the ruins?”

I walk next to the base of the gate and show Olivier the magic formation that was drawn on the base of the rubble. Analyzing the formation proved to be too much due to its complexity. The formation contained countless circles, rectangles, and squares in all different sizes. It also has mysterious characters looking like a bunch of wiggled lines, and seemingly moving like a living organism. Somehow, after combining all of said things together, a magic formation which enable travel to and from Makai was constructed. No matter how you look at it, the formation could not have been drawn by someone who is not powerful, a high ranking Evil God, or one of their acquaintances, with a vast understanding of summoning magic as well as being an expert on compact magic. Someone drew this super complex formation to allow Georg and his army to march into this world. What’s more, if they were able to draw it once, they could also have drawn it again.

“Unbelievable. Even the most knowledgeable magician in this world won’t be able to do anything against this. It’s unthinkable that a lone being was able to do this. Even with the knowledge to draw it, I can’t think of any Gods or Evil Gods that possess sufficient power to make this work. Whoever did this must be a being of extraordinary strength that completely outclassed the average Gods. One thing is

clear, however. Right now in Makai, there is someone who is willing to send armies into this world."

"Fumu, that is correct. However, you can also take it that this individual will not cross into this world personally for they would put too much strain on themselves. The only way to ensure a stop to this is to apprehend the one who drew this it seems."

"I agree. Still, the magic power required to activate the formation at this scale is no pushover. Whoever it was, they must have spent a lot of time storing up their power as well as time drawing the formation. I cannot believe that there's anyone would be able to do this over a single night. Even if this was to happen again, it will be a while before that it comes. This is an urgent matter I must inform the Kingdom as well as the patriarchs so they can think of a contingency plan. The next attack might not even be in Ente."

The possibilities of me having to fight again is high. For the past sixteen years, I've spent my time living peacefully and it flew by in a blink of an eye. From now on, things might never be the same.

If I ever find you, Georg's accomplice, you can forget about reincarnation and attaining a new life after death. I will rip your soul apart to the point where it couldn't even be call a soul anymore, I angrily think in the back of my mind. Olivier then takes out a parchment out of her bosom and start to make a transcription of the magic formation. The warrior start to collect fragment of the collapsed gate. Some time after they started picking, Christina and Selia, along with the rest of the forces, finally make their appearance. They showed up rather late, and now all that was left was for Diadora to appear. "Drannnn-ssaaannnn~~!!"

Selia, who was walking side by side with Gio and Christina-san ahead of the troops, passed through the tree line and spotted me almost immediately. She let out a vigorous greeting while waving her hand cheerfully. On the other hand, Christina-san, still retaining a firm grip on Elspard, lets out some relief after seeing that I was alright.

Already, there's no longer any sign of demonic minions in the surrounding, but even then, Christina only let her guard down slightly and keeps on surveying the area. To Selia's happy waving, I wave back to show that I am indeed unharmed. Behind me, after seeing that Christina is unharmed, Olivier continues analyzing the formation as

well as the remnant of the magic power that was used. Looking back and forth between them, I can't help but to feel some tension.

"Even if you're the Director of the Academy, aren't you anxiously worrying about your student?"

"You have excellent eyesight I see. Hahh…..It doesn't seem like I can keep it a secret from you. Christina is a student who stands out within the academy, and I could not help but to pay close attention toward her. It would be a lie if I were to say that I do not care for her. This applies to you and Miss Selia as well. After all, I can't help but to feel indebted toward you, an outsider, who had to fight for our cause, Dran."

"Honestly, the Wood Elves of this forest's sense of responsibility is on another level. Being persistent about where we are from is pointless. All three of us are fine and well in the end, as you can see. Please don't worry too much."

Replying to Olivier, I tell her the same thing I told Gio, and strongly express my honest thoughts. The Elves alone should not be the only ones to carry the burdens of defeating the danger which threatened multiple races. Finally, Olivier takes off the mask of a teacher and shows a pleasing expression at her student's safety. All of a sudden, I could see nothing but the face of a charming elf standing, watching.

It had just occurred to me that the demonic minions' ranks were broken through in a rather short amount of time. It's truly remarkable to be able to do that without even sustaining a single injury. It's to be expected of Olivier, who holds the title of Director of a Magic Academy. Later than ever, the group who was tasked with the destruction of Rafflesia's Gate, lead by Diadora, finally showed up. We start to congratulate each other along with expressing our delighted thoughts about everyone's safety.

Out of the four, the one who did the most damage was Geren and his minions, but even so, the casualties was nowhere near the number they had expected. There are many grieving at the destruction the devils had brought to their homes, but most are happy to see that the Gate is destroyed and the battle had ended. Those facts alone allowed the survivors to have a piece of mind and to smile over their victory. The distorted space around this entire region cased by the Makai Gate had been dispersed and returned to normal. Soon, Wood Elves arrived from Sai-West by traveling directly through the spirit pathway to help. After all the injured were

transported back to the village and a magic barrier was cast around the gate's ruins, we return to the village in triumph.

Although the miasma had to be cleansed from the environment, with the destruction of the gate, the atmosphere had cleared up to a certain extent. The sky isn't so dark and gloomy as before. Dark clouds started to move away and reveal a hint of the blue sky above. At this rate, the beasts which fled from the forests of Ente along with the many fairies and spirits taking refuge in Sai-West will be able to resume their peaceful lives in due time.

Returning to the village, we are greeted by the overwhelming emotions of people waiting for our return. Families of those who fell in combat, tears of sorrows, voices of sadness, encouragement of those around them, comforting each other for their loss, looking at the atmosphere, one could hardly call it a victorious return. In spite of the successful operation, which repelled the imminent threat of the devil invasion and destroying their means of transportation, the feeling of tragedy and despair sweep over the village. After all the damage that was inflicted, they are now tasked with a full scale revival of the forest as well as the reconstruction of their village to it's former glory. Moreover, the medical personnel of the village also insisted on a re-examination even after the wounded had been healed. They want to make sure there would be no arising abnormalities. The task of conducting a reconnaissance deep into Ente had been fulfilled, but I feel troubled if I was to return to Bern while leaving Sai-West in its current state. I doubt any reasonable person would not find it difficult to leave after seeing its current state.

We proceed to ask the three people with the most authority, which are Deo, Vuraiku, and Aljen'nu, to allow us to help and they gratefully accept our offer, giving us permission to help. We help with treating the injured, surveying the polluted regions of the forest, as well as giving a helping hand in replanting vegetation. The spirit pathway allowed roughly a thousand Elves to travel through it at once and after two days of hard working, we managed to collect all the pieces of the gate and destroyed every last one. During that time, Olivier and Deo had spoken to the one in charge of the reinforcement unit and instructed them to distribute the supplies among the troops as well as directed the healers to help the most wounded fighter first, which helped everything running smoothly.

When the process of exterminating the remaining demonic minions had been completed, the Elves' combatants were stationed within the village to keep watch,

although most were tasked with helping the reconstruction of many trees and houses. At this point, I discuss the topic of leaving the Elves' village alongside Christina-san and Selia. Since the Elves now have enough manpower as well as more than enough materials for the job, even if we are to stay, we would be of insignificant help, and so the idea I propose is to leave the village immediately. It's even more dire for Christina, who had taken an extended vacation time, and was given a warning from Olivier.

Even though the battle had been won, the damages Sai-West suffered was significant, thus there isn't going to be a large victory feast. On the night before we leave, Diadora, Fio, and Marle comes to our room for a visit. Most of the work was taken over by the Elves, so we spent the day packing our belongings, and readying to depart from the village. Diadora brings with her a tray full of dishes stacked up like a mountain, as well as various bottles contained fruit wines, juices inside. She brought enough for a feast to celebrate our victory.

Seeing Diadora giving us a visit, Fio and Marle can't help but be surprise. I, myself, had hoped that after the battle against Rafflesia and Georudo, we would establish some sort of friendship with each other. We could have settled anywhere we wanted, like sitting on chairs above the carpet, but we choose to sit on the beds instead. Raising our cups filled with wine, juice, or water, we cheer then gulp down a mouthful from our cups. In my hand is a cup with engravings made out of tin featuring a unique design of flowers, and in it is a yellowish liquid which is actually wine, brewed from flowers they have here.

"Everyone came back safely, Marle is very happy-desu! When I was waiting, my heart throbbed a lot."

Sitting on her special place, Fio's lap, Marle tells us the same thing she had been saying ever since we returned. She was not allowed to leave the village, and so she was really worried about our well being. Even though she had already said it countless times, since it's from the bottom of her heart, I don't really mind.

"Ahaha, thank you for worrying about us, Marle. Recalling what happened, it was more painful than anything I've ever experienced before. Honestly, I was constantly having the thought of not being able to come back alive. Having returned in one piece like this, it was all thanks to Christina, Selia, and Dran. Christina-san especially. Without her, I don't even know if we would succeed at all."

Since coming back to the safety of her village, Fio had been moving her delicate body vigorously, but she seems much more relaxed now in our room. She often eat a few berries from the many plates after taking a sip of the wine from her cup. Whether or not the wine was too strong, by the time she had finished the second cup, her cheeks were already red. Having a red face, Fio stares at Christina passionately then lets out a smile.

“Besides~ Christina is very popular with the others. Wood Elves, Wolf-men, even Arachne, they all said that they like her. I was so surprised. Well, I think everyone I asked were girls……”

What Marle said is true. Christina had devoted her whole into helping the people of this forest throughout the first time we encountered them. After all the fighting had settled, and we returned to Sai-West, pretty much all the ladies, from all different races, greeted Christina while giving her a passionate gaze, as if they wanted to get to know her body. Even I, who had the sensibility of a dragon, could tell that they hold affectionate feelings toward Christina. However, Christina has no intention of answering their feelings. Maybe she just doesn’t want to be tied down, or perhaps she’s just shy.

It can’t be help that, from my point of view, watching how Christina-san handle the girls was very amusing, but it seems that the number was overwhelming and she’s mentally exhausted as the result. Being together with us help her ease the tension, and she seems to be able to relax just fine. Parting her red lips from her cup, Christina lets out a sigh toward Marle’s words. The situation is even more severe than I thought.

“I don’t mean to offend, but I’m tired and I don’t feel well enough to handle such things properly right now. For me, fighting Geren is much easier than having to deal with that matter.”

After showing her frustration, Christina finished the wine in her cup in one go. The muscle beneath her white skin covered neck moves vigorously each time she gulp down the wine. Her indecent action completely betrayed her refined appearance.

“I feel unpleasant and I never want to fight that person again. His look was like something right out of a nightmare…..

Christina-san, do you always feel like that at your Academy? From what Marle said, I have a feeling you're very popular there as well."

Selia is very curious about the human's ways of life, and so she asked Christina and waits for the reply while hold her cup of wine with both hands. After becoming accustomed with the everyday lifestyle in Bern, Selia's sense of wariness toward humans had faded away, and now she's inquiring about the city as well as school life.

Before she starts answering, Christina pours more golden-ish purple grape wine into her cup and empty it into her stomach in a flash. *That's surprising, is she a heavy drinker? So far, she seem to have quite a tolerance for them.*
"To tell you the truth, it's not as proactive as how it was here, but I do receive lots of letters and gifts. Eyes were always on me. For god's sake, I'm not a spectacle, honestly."

Christina-san lost her cool and pouts. *Fumu~ she's rather cute. She's not drunk, but could the atmosphere around her had swept her away? I can't imagine what kind of life you live hidden from the others. I wonder, are you really a seventeen year old girl? No matter, she's a special one that's for sure.*
So far, she had been wearing the atmosphere of a beautiful girl with enough charm to bring down any man, but just under that image hid something dangerous. Right now, there's none of the facade and the temper of a young girl is exposed, and I like her much better this way. I've yet to reach the age of twenty as a man, but I can't help but to feel sympathy for someone who is suffering everyday for whatever reason.

"It's probably due to Christina-san's outstanding features. Although, looking at you right now, I doubt there will be as many people who would longed for you. Beside that, is studying at the Magic Academy fun?"

"Nothing particularly stands out for me. However, I do remember seeing others beside me having delighted expression around the academy. I, um, I guess you can say that I'm not the best at socializing with others. I would feel….uncomfortable whenever I was with someone….more or less. Truthfully, I don't have any friends…none, yeah, no one at all."

Suddenly coming to that conclusion, Christina turns her face away, and start mumbling in a low voice that's hard to make out.

Ah, Christina-san, she's seldom on friendship, but I've guessed as much. I feel pity for her on this topic of discussion.
"What, no way, Christina-san doesn't have any friends?"

"Uu….that, that's…."

Just as I was thinking to myself, Fio splendidly stabs Christina in her weak mental state. Moreover, Fio did it with no ill intention in mind as she ask while blinking her eyes in astonishment. After all, she became extremely popular among the forest dwellers in the span of only a few days. It's hard to imagine that she doesn't have any friends over at the academy she attends, but I don't want to speak my thought out loud out of pity.

"Ehhh. Is that the truth?"

"N, no, that's not the case…..not at all. I do greet others, and there are people at tea parties as well….once, or a couple of times….."

"Ah~ I beg your pardon. Uh. You honestly didn't think that I would think that you don't have friends? Not at all, right?" (T.L. Try and follow the logic fo a drunkard.)

"……Fu, it's fine. At any rate, I'm……."

Altogether, Christina drops her shoulders, goes silent, and resume drinking wine.

Fumu, she's sulking again. Eh, eh, Fio finally starts to take notice of the severe damage she've inflicted, don't nervously look at Selia and me for help. Seeing how Christina is, even I can't think of a quick fix solution to save you. While I was thinking in my head, Selia's cheerful voice break the awkward silent.
"Now, now, cheer up Christina-san. Everyone here likes to be around you. I'm your best friend~~~!! Dran-sannn~~ you like Christina-san, too~~~?"

Huh? There's something fishy about this. She's red from the base of her neck up until her ears, did the wine finally taking its effect? Speaking of which, there's an empty wine bottle next to her…..Oh well, since we are on the same wavelength, I might as well follow, I suppose.

“Yeah. Just like Selia says, I like Christina-san. Needless to say about your beauty, you are courageous, kind to others, and is a very lovely girl. I need to thank the fate that allowed us to meet.”

“Marle~ also Christina-san, like a lot~-desu! Christina’s silver hair esspeeecially~ When bathing under the sunlight, it looks like glittering silver. Very very~ pretty~”

“I like you too~ not just because you saved Marle and helped us but being near you give me a sense of comfort~”

“Hahaha~ I’m a Lamia~”

Selia start laughing uncontrollably. The wine definitely affected her, but the alcohol content wasn’t that high. The tip of her tail start to twitch and rattle so it would seem that maybe her snake portion has gotten drunk.

Laughing “hahaha~” is the current condition of Selia and Fio. Not joining the conversation just now is Diadora who was simply taking small drinks from her own cup. I could not spot any change on her white skin in the dim light, so I assume the effects of wine have yet to touch her.

“What about you, Diadora~ You, have been doing nothing drinking wine~ come on~ talk to us~”

“If I had known that you’re such a bad drinker, I might not have brought the wine. Fio, dear, did you get permission from Deo to drink wine?”

“Whaaattt~~ Even without Oto-san’s permission, I can still drink wine. Look here~ this flower wine was made from a lot of flower~ I pick some of them myself from those that I’ve grown. I drink so my muscles can relax~”

“There’s no winning against a drunken person. Honestly, about that question, I suppose I don’t dislike Christina. I can’t help but feel gratitude toward her. She fought with her all, and when the fighting was over, she even helped everyone as much as she could.”

“No, I only did what was natural. I don’t deserve to be praised like that.”

As the result of positive comments in succession, Christina finally broke her silence and looked up. Her face has reddened but that's not the effect of alcohol. *Fumu~ she's embarrassed it seems.*
"No way, Christina-san, your face is all red. I've seen your adorable side."

"N-no, there's no such thing. I'm not like that. There's no way I would feel embarrassed."

Well, well, you can deny it all you want.
Afterward, we continue pouring wine cups after cups, and drink until our heart's content, chatting happily and not having to worry about tomorrow's sad goodbyes. Since Christina possesses the body of a Superior Original, she seems to have an exceptionally high tolerance to alcohol. Even after emptying cups of wine, she still doesn't show any signs of being drunk.

As for the powerful Spirit of the Black Rose, Diadora, her tolerance doesn't seem to fall short of Christina either. At the sametime, Marle, Fio, and Selia don't have the affinity for the stuff. The first one to enter the dreaming world is Marle. She lies on a piece of cloth inside a basket and sleeps soundly while letting out rough breathing. As time passes, the two remaining drunkards have a gloomy atmosphere around them, but with so much food and high quality drinks befitted of a village's festival feast laid before me, and surrounded by beautiful women of various race, I was able to keep enjoying the atmosphere. As the night grew old, Fio starts singing songs her race loves, and I too share one or two from my own village.

Although we do not have any musical instrument, and everyone is in a merry state, our songs were widely complimented, but we take care not to be too loud since Marle's sleeping in the room. After a few more songs were sung, the drunken atmosphere thicken even more, but it's enjoyable nevertheless. Christina's mood, too, seems to have gotten better, and starts singing the poem her mother taught her about the olden days.

It is an old, old tale. How old exactly, no one knows. It was about a hero who lived in the distance past.

There was once a boy who lived in a certain place. Someone who could not help but reach out to others in trouble and refused to leave them to their suffering. It was such a boy. Before long, the boy grew up and left his birthplace to go on an adventure,

visiting various lands. He encountered many different kinds of people, helped those in need, endured hardships, and kept on journeying throughout the world. A continent that float high up in the sky. A castle built on the bottom of the sea where no light could ever reach. Traveling across lakes that were formed by large cracks in the earth. Whichever unexpected land he visited, the boy met lots of people, formed bonds of friendships, and gain companions along the way.

A High Elf who could communicate with the Spirit King and control all spirits.

A young priestess who was raised to serve the Gods from a young age.

A magician who understood and was capable of unraveling every law of the world.

A swordsman from a certain country who used unique swordsmanship and donned unique armor.

A strong warrior who was born in a savage village that fought in a remote region.

A certain priest belonging to a sect which spread their beliefs among the people.

Soon, the boy became a young man who experienced adventures alongside his companions. Throughout their journey, they accomplished many good deeds, were famous among the people, and was hailed as extraordinary Heroes. The young Hero then would go on to become the greatest of all. The young Hero's fame spread throughout every corner of the world, and would touch the hearts of many people. When the world tree's root was attack by an Evil Dragon, they received help from a white scaled dragon. The story is transmitted through Christina's transparent voice so well that I feel as if I was experiencing the tales first hand.

At the laughter of Selia and Fio, who are now both very intoxicated, Christina purse her lips and stop singing. Her song stopped at the mention of a white dragon's involvement in assisting the seven heroes in defeating the Evil Dragon. There's more to the story but it can't be helped if the singer doesn't want to sing.

After Christina's song was over, silence returned to the room. Noticing that we are looking at her in silence, Christina lower her face in a shy manner and once again turn red from embarrassment.

“Ahaha, I’m sorry for making everyone listen to my boring song. It was taught to me by my mother, and I did not sing after so long, aha.”

“Oh no, not at all, Christina-san. It was very good, and was enough to put usssh~ all to shame.”

Selia seems to have trouble speaking just now, her words sound a little disconnected. Still, she then expresses her true feelings toward Christina’s song, while her blue eyes sparkling like stars.

“Oh, oh, and then! When I heard about the High Elf that could communicate with the Spirit King, I thought I heard it wrong, and was very surprised. Christina-san’s voice was so beautiful to listen to~ I want to submerge myself in the song, Christina-san, I want to listen more.”

“Is, is that so? Haha, my mother would be very please to hear that. I was afraid my singing would bring embarrassment to myself.”

Still feeling a little shy, Christina replies. Thinking to myself, there’s a few things I want to ask her. Even after accepting the fact that I was reborn as a human, my feelings can’t help but stir at the contents of the song.

The song had brought back my memories of the past, a very nostalgic feeling. That is because the young man and his companions from her song, they were undoubtedly the seven who robbed me of my life as a dragon. In a calm voice, I ask.

“Christina-san, you said that your mother taught you that song? It’s one that I’ve never heard before from my village, and I was wondering if it’s something passed down in your family from generations to generation?”

“Eh? Ah, this song was indeed passed down from generations in my mother’s family. Ever since I was small, I was taught this song and I constantly practiced it. I remember everything as clear as day.”

“T-that’s so?”

“Dran? What’s wrong? Is something bothering you?”

Mistaking my intention, Christina looks at me anxiously.

Fumu, there's nothing you need to worry about Christina-san.
"I liked it a lot. It's easily my favorite song. However, I believe the song didn't truly end when the Evil Dragon was defeated. If there's still more, I would love to hear it."

"I, I see. I'm sorry it's finished. The song ended there. With the help of the White Dragon, the Hero slew the Evil Dragon, that's the end."

Christina tighten up a little at my request and decline me out right. To me, it's obvious that she is lying. Maybe she doesn't feel comfortable continuing.

From experience, I decide not to pursue the subject any further for now. Although I have doubts, if Christina is really who I think she is, then it's quite ironic for the three Fate Goddesses to spin our destiny like this. Well, you never know what might happen.

"So there isn't a continuation. That's too bad. Truly regrettable."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disappoint you, it's just…."

Hearing my saddened words, Christina grows a little depressed as well. *Darn, I failed to conceal my emotions.*
Seeing the awkward atmosphere between Christina and me, Selia wraps her arm around my neck and, with the other hand, starts pulling my cheeks strongly. *Ouch! It hurts! Don't tell me she's intending to peel my cheek off!?*
"Drannn-san~~ what did you do to Christinna-san~~did you embarrass her~~? Bad Dran~~ you need to be punished!!"

Fuun~ Selia lets out a displeased snort, then pulls my cheeks even harder, and at the same time, wraps her heavy tail around me tight. *Guoo, she can't control her strength when she's drunk! Hey hey, if I was like any ordinary human, all my bones would have been broken by now!*
"Ahahaha, way to go, Selia~~!! That's what he gets for bothering Christina-san~~!!"

"They're really bad with wine, how childish."

No, Diadora! At times like this, instead of sighing, you should help me!

“D-Dran, are you alright? Selia, please don’t over do it. Look, I’m fine, don’t be upset.”

“Fufufufu, Christinsa-san~ you’re too nice-desu~~ if you…leave me to it….it would have been better. But since you say so, haha, I guess I’ll stop, haha.”

Her breath has a strong smell of alcohol. Looking next to her, I see several empty bottles of wine lying around. The alcohol had taken a great toll on her body and even though she said she would stop, my body is still being coiled by her powerful tail. If she was to ever be offered a drink in the future, I will make sure she won’t intoxicate herself.

The next morning, after waking up in a room that smelled like a wine cellar, we are escorted by Olivier, Diadora, Gio, Fio, and Marle to the gate of the village. In addition to the things we had brought along from Bern, we were also given rewards for helping with the conflict. Now, our luggage had doubled compared to when we left Bern, especially for Christina. After the short period of time spent in Sai-West, she had gained quite the number of followers.

“Onee-sama, please accept this. This is the clothes I’ve made using my threads.”

“Christina-sama, please take care. Please eat lots on your way back. Please take this fruit salad I’ve made for you!!”

Surrounded by girls in every direction, Christina seems really itching to leave.

Fu~mu. Watching from the side, I’m envious, but I’m not sure if I want to be in that situation.
For me, waking up this morning with Selia squeezing me tightly was pretty uncomfortable. In addition, the alcohol had yet to get out of my system so I’m having a slight headache. I want some peace and quiet. (T.L. I know dem feels Q.Q)

“Selia~ are you alright-desu? Although Marle had gone to sleep halfway through, Marle knows that drinking too much is bad for you~”

“She’s fine. After all, Selia must have had an ulterior motive for coiling around Dran all night.”

Hey now Fio, I wonder if you realize the meaning of those words. Maybe some spirit has possessed you, please don’t add fuel to the fire.
“Un, yeah….I’m fine, but I will have to reflect on this. Erm, Dran-san, I’m sorry for leaving my scale marks all over your body….I’m sorry, for being such a handful.”

“I don’t mind. I just want you to take care from now on. Alright, let’s leave soon. If we take too long past the promised time, we’ll only cause the people at home extra worries.”

I calmly answer Selia, taking care not to sound too bothered. Meanwhile, Christina is finishing up packing the gifts from the girls, and lets out some relief. It seems like fighting devils really is a lot less troublesome for her than interacting with the female fans. After a bit, we are all set to take our leave, and Olivier and Diadora bid us goodbyes.

“Christina, it looks like meeting Dran is really beneficial for you. I’m happy for you. Selia, you’re also a dear friend of hers, thank you for being her friend. Although, please take care with the alcohol. And Dran, not only are you an excellent magician Denzel had recommended, you are also an outstanding fighter. If you ever go to Galios, please give the academy a visit, we will welcome you.”

“Magic Academy. I will keep your kind offer in mind, Olivier-san. It’s an appealing offer since I would be able to meet Christina there.”

“Please give it some thought. I want to, once again, show you my gratitude for your effort in helping us solve our crisis. Thank you very much”

After saying so, Olivier gracefully bows. Then, Diadora steps forward while holding a small bag in her hand, trying to hide her bashful tone by speaking bluntly.

“This is for you, Dran particularly. Because you helped me many times, I want to at least show my gratitude. Please accept.”

Accepting the small bag, I look inside and find that there were rose seeds inside.

“This is, I see, they are Black Rose seeds.”

“Erm, correct, they are my seeds. When they bloom, they will make excellent ingredients for magical medicines and such. They are special and is very easy to take care of, you can have them planted in you village. Once harvested, you can sell them, use them as ingredient, or whatever else you want to do.”

“Fumu~ I shall accept this unexpected gift. Although you wanted to thank me, for this, allow me to say thank you, too. Thank you, Diadora. Your thoughtfulness, I will accept them. If you have time, please come to Bern and visit. Although it’s not a special place by any means, I will arrange appropriate hospitality for you. I’m glad we met, Diadora.”

“Really? I look forward to meeting you again in the future, Dran. Now, this is my personal way of thanking you.”

Suddenly, Diadora steps forward, and just as the sweet smell of rose tickles my nose, Diadora’s lips were overlapping with mine. Feeling the sensation of her soft and moist lips, adding along with the aroma she has, I could only open my eyes wide in complete surprise at Diadora’s boldness. Our lips stayed overlapping for some time in full display for the others to see and be amazed.

Staring at our intense kiss, Christina’s neck and ears looks like that of a boiling octopus, completely reddened and her mouth gasping for air like a fish out of water. Apparently, our deep and long kiss is too stimulating for Christina.

From the outside, she looks like a mature woman, giving off a charismatic charm, but she’s still a little innocent girl inside. This is a little surprising. Finally, Diadora parts her lips from mine, just in time for Selia’s mind to recover from the massive disarray and shout out in loud voice, almost to the point of crying.

“Eh, ehhh, EHHHHHH~~~~~!!! No way, Diadora-san, whaa, what are you doing-desu!?!? Even I haven’t done that with Dran-san yet!!!!”

“You know, that was just a way for me to show my appreciation. Dran saved my life, so it’s only a natural thing to do.”

To Selia, who was trembling and on the verge of crying, Diadora answered with a straight face. However, I could see that the tip of her ears are bright red. To me, Black Rose is someone who is very bewitching, but also cute in many ways. Recalling what had just happened, Selia suddenly became embarrassed. Exchanging a final look at Diadora, I turn away and the anxiety I've held in my chest since the battle against Georg eases a little. At the time, I temporarily released my true power in Makai, and there's a good chance that one or two Evil Gods might have sensed it and connected the dots, probably guessing whose power it was. I can't help but to worry about my future life as a human.

.....I found it. I found it I found it I found it. Hahahahaha, fufufufu, hahahaha! Even though you have perished, yet there's no mistake that it belongs to you! Hahahaha, it won't be long until I get to play with you again! I've been waiting, Dra-chan!

[To be continued]

==========

This marked the end of volume one and serves as the prologue to the next arc.

==========

さようなら竜生、こんにちは人生
GOOD BYE, DRAGON LIFE